

spare

Rib

No 27/30p

P523/344

Mountain Woman Blues

Working Women's Charter

INDIA - Eve Teasing, Widow Burning

Food Co-ops to cut costs

SEX ROLES in the classroom

WEDLOCKED WOMEN

Lee Comer.

Writing from the inside, from her own life and the lives of housewives she interviewed, Lee Comer describes the real mechanics of female oppression, as it is experienced by the great mass of women in their role as housewives and mothers.



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Which three of these words and names do you associate with most?

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EW 18P

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MP

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Social security sexism

Dear Spare Rib,

I thought you might be interested to discover yet another way women are discriminated against. I am a student living with my student boyfriend. I sent a claim to the S.S. for a refund of my dental charges and received the enclosed letter. To add insult to injury the only reason they know about Bill is because I tried to claim S.S. during Easter for two weeks when I had absolutely no income and was refused because the male has to apply. Bill was receiving a vacation grant so he could not legally apply so I remained penniless. Any suggestions for a protest?

Yours,
Maggie Wootton,
London, W.14.

Men on women's work

Dear Spare Rib,

One could hardly help, as a male, from being amused at the action of the male workers as told in the "Daily Mail" of last Thursday. The fact that they went on strike because they found the work to which they had been assigned was women's work, and too boring and too hard. The management was somewhat apologetic and said that it was the custom to only enforce this female work on the male members as a punishment - it was also poorly paid.

I suppose, in addition, the "liberated females" had to do their housework, look after husbands and children too.

Yours sincerely,
Jan de Martyn, London, N22

Wedlocked women

Dear Spare Rib,

If Lee Comer feels sub-human she should live in East Anglia where child-free 27-year-olds like myself are considered odd, physically incapable and lacking in human qualities. Here most girls are married and pregnant at 18, not necessarily in that order: motherhood is approved and celebrated. Mothers wheel their precious responsibilities briskly along our narrow pavements with little regard for those who have to leap out of their way onto the road. They fill the shops at lunchtime and wonder why working women with an hour to do the shopping become impatient.

Incidentally, it is also easy for a working woman who feels harassed or bored to become submerged in mediocrity and exhaustion.

With the present shortage of 24-hour nurseries, one should anticipate at least four years of bondage per child, so why does an educated, thinking woman like Lee Comer become pregnant accidentally and then grouse about it?

Lots of good wishes,
Jennifer Gibbs,
Saxmunden,
Suffolk.

Becoming party-linish

Dear Spare Rib,

Although living where I do I never get a chance to see the films, exhibitions, events etc. that you print in Short List, I read about them with great interest.

In S.R. 21 you mention an exhibition of paintings by Edvard Munch. You make no other comment except to say how he saw and painted women. This may be true, but I feel that he is being judged or assessed by you as an artist on his attitude towards women. And I think this is wrong. There is more to any artist than how he sees women, or if the artist is a woman, how she sees men. Are we to dismiss their work if we happen to disagree with their vision in this particular area?

Munch was also preoccupied with death, loneliness, isolation, as much, if not more, as with his 'tri-partite image of woman', but you do not mention any of these.

I think there is a danger of women liberationists becoming too narrow in our view, too dogmatic (which doesn't mean we can't be sure) of becoming party-linish. Anything that does not fit in with our conception of how the world should be is evil; anyone who doesn't agree with our views is being obstructive. Those who aren't for us are against us.

Are we to write off writers and artists, like D. H. Lawrence or Mailer because we object to the way they treat or think of women?

The Rolling Stones may be very male chauvinistic, but can't you still think their music is great? Taken to its full conclusion this attitude of despising people who are against us could result in censorship and suppression. Although please do not think I am saying that your tone towards Edvard Munch was despising or intolerant, just narrow.

All the best,
Carol Blackwell,
Antrim, N. Ireland.

To comment on Munch's attitude towards women is not to pass judgement on his ability as an artist. As you say Munch was also preoccupied with death, isolation and loneliness and these particular preoccupations are fully discussed in all art history textbooks, whereas the significance of his treatment of women is usually passed over and no attempt is made to see his view of women in the light of late nineteenth century attitudes towards women and the extending of feminism. It's true, though, that Munch deserves more than a throw-away paragraph in Short List.

Rosie

Age discrimination

Dear Spare Rib,

Here's my problem. I married young and had kids. By the time I was 34, my children were becoming independent, so I decided to do what I'd always wanted to do - go to university. Now at 38, my children are teenagers and I've got a pretty good upper second Honours Degree and some teaching experience.

My department at the university is, of course, entirely male dominated. These young men patted me on the back when I got my degree - thought it a marvellous thing that a woman with domestic responsibilities and not unlimited time to study should do so well - then they told me that of course there was no hope of a teaching job for me in a university, because I was far too old.

I can't apply for a job on a minimum level because I am of senior age and too high up the pay scale, even though I might insist on accepting the lower rate of pay, and I can't apply for a senior post because of lack of experience.

When is this male-dominated society going to realise that whilst accepting the child bearing and rearing responsibilities, we should then be allowed not only to train for a career in our 30s, but also be given special consideration regarding the age technicalities for obtaining good jobs.

Universities are run by men. The few women dons are usually unmarried or at least childless; many of them are a limited sort of woman. I have over 25 years of useful working life to offer, and

LETTERS

ability to teach, an enthusiasm for my subject, and a wealth of life's experience. What can I do about it? Yours,
Annie Bean, Exeter.

P.S. I'm tired of being told about all sorts of 'second best' jobs that a clever little woman like me can apply for.

Dear Spare Rib,
We attended the conference on June 7th 'The Women's Movement - Problems, Perspectives and Possibilities' at the Polytechnic of Central London. We would like to put forward our criticisms of certain aspects of the conference.

1. We feel that the organisation of a women's conference should reflect the feminist principles that the conference is trying to clarify. Women's groups have rightly emphasised the need for all women to participate equally in all organisational matters, and at this conference there were unnecessary bureaucratic procedures which isolated us from each other.

For instance, we were all made to wait and register our names for no apparent reason before entering the hall, which disrupted the beginning of the lecture. If this was meant to enable future contact, surely we could have signed a list provided later.

The organisation of the canteen didn't help break the isolation between us. If we could have participated more in the getting and clearing away of food, it would have improved the atmosphere and allowed more contact, and would not have been using other women to serve us.

2. The occasion where we felt the least involved was Juliet Mitchell's lecture. We are not criticising the content of her lecture (as far as we could understand) but we felt the delivery of it hindered understanding of her argument. She was using a male elitist academic approach which clouded her theories with a lot of defensive mystification.

The lack of discussion at the end reflected the lack of communication. We felt talked at rather than involved - it was a lecture that was meant to be read rather than listened to. The best way to absorb theory is by having it related to practice. Juliet Mitchell's lecture suffered from a lack of practical illustration of points which we could relate to.

Surely future conferences should aim to break down the barriers between lecturer and lectured, organiser and organised, women and women.

Yours,
Rachel Bischoff, Helen Crocker,
Joan Erens,
Ingrid Primander,
London, W.8.

Advertising

I was interested in Zoe Fairbairns comments in SR 24 about the Health Education Council's advert, 'Is it fair to force your baby to smoke cigarettes?'.

I take her point that pictures of naked women are used so often in advertising as to be a cliché, but I do feel that this picture was different. The more usual comment I have heard about it was that it was repulsive to see a pregnant woman in the nude, and this made me very angry. Pregnancy is one of the conditions in which the female body can be, and it can be attractive or otherwise as any of the other possible conditions - old, young, plump, slim or whatever. Women may enjoy being attractive, but they are not obliged to be, or to try to be. They are entitled to be ordinary or ugly looking, untidy, unfashionable, middle-aged, overweight or pregnant without having to apologise about it.

Consequently I feel that the publication of this picture was a step in the right direction. Women need to see an image of themselves other than the standard glossy, youthful well-groomed advertising model, and I thought that this particular advert made a very pleasant change.

Yours,
Margaret Hawsworth,
Reading.

Vibrator advertisement

Dear Spare Rib,

I have seethed over the wording in the advertisement headed 'What every woman should know about vibrators'. My comments concern the following extracts: 'Happily most women achieve orgasm'. This is not known to be so. I think that very few women as yet have overcome the male-based imposition that women have intrinsically no sexuality to talk of or certainly none without connection to male stimulation and/or sadistic dominance.

'... though to us mere males some of them take an inordinately long time to do so which is why many couples use one during foreplay.' I resent the underlying sneering of the 'more knowledgeable male' who pays fashionably common lip service to being painstaking at understanding and tolerating differences in women. The emphasis is inevitably on speed and competitive achievement. No suggestion of course that some men, many men? are unable to and/or can't be bothered to give pleasurable sensations to a woman.

'You will find it much better for both of you if he does not have to concentrate on delaying tactics trying to wait for you.' So it's no good if you can't manage an orgasm when he's ready because he certainly won't be bothered when

he's had his.

'It is also less exhausting for the poor man and he might be the one you want to keep.' This sounds like a threat that selfish and self-righteous man will not tolerate a woman taking his precious time, patience, and his very thin coating of humanity kept for other things than women.

It also makes a vast but false assumption that men and/or vibrators are the only means by which a woman can have an orgasm. Never heard of other women and masturbation?

The inclusion of advertisements like this purporting to be advisory, but actually broadcasting gross ignorance and distortion is most confusing and, I think, undermining.

Yours sincerely, Frances Kelly,
Leeds 3.

Strength of a mother's position

Dear Spare Rib,

According to Margaret Walters in your issue 23, Juliet Mitchell sees the acquisition of culture, in her book 'Psychoanalysis and Feminism' as an impassably patriarchal process. I don't think this is necessarily the case; in 'Playing and reality', D. W. Winnicott, a well-known paediatrician and essentially Freudian psychoanalyst, discusses the location of cultural experience. He feels that a child's actual potential for cultural activity is rooted in the earliest mother/baby relationship, and ideally for the baby, culture and playing represent the moving away, in a spontaneous and trustful manner, from the mother/child amalgam, into the 'potential space' where a child 'finds' the real world and makes it its own. If the original mothering or mothering environment is unreliable, or not adaptive enough, the child's ability to share and create culturally may be limited. This implies that women have and always have had responsibility in predisposing a child's basic cultural motivation, so if this is the case, now that we are more aware we can extend this responsibility, in order to dilute the amount of patriarchal dogma thrust upon our children and offer them more open-ended alternatives.

All of Winnicott's works suggest that there is much more to the mother's role than meets the eye, that she is crucial in the earliest development of personality in the child, and I feel that however much our ideas about motherhood may change, we still have a lot to learn about it, particularly with respect to how our own emotional growth and fulfillment in other spheres can revitalise it, hopefully opening the way to a less restrictive future for our children.

Yours sincerely, Cathy Ward, Yorks.

Teachers attacked

Dear Spare Rib collective,

Congratulations on your second birthday. I have been an irregular reader of Spare Rib for its duration. I am the sort of woman who finds long articles on sex extremely tedious and the spate of these several months ago caused me to stop buying my copy for a while. I am not denying the usefulness of such articles, but personally I could not take any more jolts to my middle class upbringing. I admire what you are doing and realise that it is only by printing the sort of articles which I find so shocking that women's, and men's for that matter, attitudes to sex will change.

Your article on the education campaign in the East End started me thinking that perhaps you could do some useful pioneering work in this direction yourselves if your magazine slanted from time to time towards the early teenager. Lack of the right education is the biggest obstacle against more working class women (I do not like putting society into categories, but until we are basically a homogeneous society we cannot close our eyes to the fact that such differentiations exist) wanting to be emancipated. I suppose that for many girls Women's Liberation means burning a bra, and thus it holds no truck with them. The aim of the working class girl is still to leave school as soon as possible and to have a child and husband by the age of eighteen. Teaching must be at fault here, for as the teacher drones on about Henry VIII the average teenager turns off. There must be a re-think on education to make it more relevant to the needs of the young.

Comment on your Achilles Heel. In the Molly Parkin interview I notice that you spell all right - alright. There is not such a word. Yours sincerely,
Mrs. Patricia Baker,
Richmond, Surrey.

In order to print as many letters as possible, we've had to cut some of them

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Front cover photo taken 1918, blue grass region of the Appalachian Mountains. See story page 46.

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conversation



Anne is an American woman living in England with her 16-year-old daughter April. Anne left her husband years ago, and Anne and April, like many other women, have had to find ways of surviving in the world without the structure expected of a proper family.

Here they discuss the daughter, April's, recent abortion. April had only just met her boyfriend, Vee, and at the time Anne was also living with John.

Their different reactions to the event are interesting not because of personality differences, but because of what they show about the changing relationship between mother and daughter.

Anne: Let's see, where to begin. The other morning you came into the kitchen and said that you had tried on your black jumper and you were really surprised because it fitted, and then you realized you weren't pregnant anymore. You were so very casual about it. It still seems to me that event was really painful and difficult and, yet, for you it wasn't. It makes me feel there's a great difference between my perception of getting pregnant and having an abortion and your perception of it. I'd like to talk about that difference in experience.

April: For me it was most difficult about the third week after the abortion.

Why was that?

Well, the way my relationship with Vee was going. I'd go to see him, he'd try to comfort me, but we couldn't get too close together because we couldn't sleep together. That was one of the most difficult things. Otherwise it wasn't so bad.

I also think about it this way. It seems, oh a couple of years ago, we used to joke and I'd say to you, don't worry if you get pregnant because I'll raise the baby.

Yes.

Then you get pregnant when it's very inconvenient for you to have a baby, but neither of us

could go through with you having a baby and me taking care of it. It seemed then, even before you met Vee, you would say you didn't mind the thought of having an abortion. I thought, Jesus, she's really setting herself up.

I probably was. The thing that really pissed me off was that every-body seemed to know I'd get pregnant and I was the only one who didn't. I mean I didn't know consciously.

What do you mean?

I feel as if someone should have told me or something.

Everybody did tell you.

No, they didn't. No one said, look you're setting yourself up, until after I was pregnant . . . and then everyone else knew I was and I was still convinced that I wasn't.

I felt bad about that too. When I realized you were, before I told you to go and get a rabbit test. It made me feel like I did all those times when I was pregnant before, when we were living in New York. It was like falling into a bottomless pit. And what made me feel really bad was that it was somehow exactly the same, that all the things I knew, which I thought I had communicated to you, didn't make any difference. It was going to be the same tortuous experience all over again.

I didn't think it was like that at all. The only

time I ever freaked out was when I first found out, and that only lasted ten minutes. You really made me feel a lot better, you know, when I was crying . . . and as soon as that passed I felt as if everything would be okay. I was afraid to go into the hospital, but that was because I wasn't sure if they were going to make me completely unconscious, and I was just afraid. You know, like going to a doctor.

Well, when you think about it now, what do you think?

It seems sort of unreal . . . like the whole thing seems to be blown up a lot bigger than it really is, in a lot of ways. I sort of enjoyed being pregnant, but that was because I knew I was going to have an abortion and not going to have to cope with a kid. The feeling was nice, but I was worried.

God! April . . .

Well, I wouldn't get pregnant again just to have that feeling.

After it was confirmed, even before it was confirmed, I would lie awake at night in agony.

Oh, Momma . . .

I knew I had enough influence over you so I could say despite all the difficulties and the trouble it would cause, you should go ahead and have the child. I think that I feel conflict about whether or

not abortion is a good thing. I guess that stems from the fact that after the abortions I've had and the ectopic pregnancy, I'm not sure if I'm fertile. So I thought, maybe I've really blown it and I can't have another child. I'm thinking of you and me as a single unit which is probably the error behind this.

Well, if you had said I should have the child, then I would have been in strong conflict. But I don't think I would have had it because I would always feel a bit strange with it... as if you were more the mother. How do you know that?

I can just tell. I remember in bed at night thinking at the moment I couldn't handle it. I was too selfish and into myself to want a child around.

It kind of shocks me when you say that. I feel this is really important... your relationship with Vee is temporary.

I think of my relationship with Vee as being important. I'm not worried about not having children, I mean, I know I will... I'm not too interested now. The idea of not being able to have kids doesn't frighten me or mean much to me.

Well, it didn't mean much to me when I was fifteen either. But it seems like one of the reasons you're connected to people in generations is that you have the advantages of learning from someone who is older.

Yes, Well, I knew you were unhappy about your abortions, but we never talked seriously about it, only joking, and I still don't know much about them. I don't know about your ectopic pregnancy. All I know is that you were in the hospital. Well, you were only five.

Right. And I guess it's still really hard for me to talk about it. I don't mind talking about it to people I know well at all. It seems sort of casual. It's like something but it's not. I mean it is, but you can easily live through it.

Don't mind me crying... I'd rather be able to cry and not have it stop us talking than feel I shouldn't.

Okay, Momma.

I think maybe the reason I have all this unexpressed feeling now, is that when it happened to me I didn't express those feelings.

The thing that made it so easy for me was that I had a lot of people comforting me, who were really emotionally supportive. I had you and John, being a doctor, to explain it and tease me, and Vee was very sympathetic and worried. I felt that no matter what, it was okay because people were there to take care of me. No one was around to do that for you. That's why when I first found out you had abortions I was really upset because I wanted to have been there to comfort you. You know, I probably couldn't have understood it then, but when something happens to you I've always wanted to be around to comfort you. It's nice to have someone there.

Yes, it is. Part of the reason I was so distressed was because I thought, my god, it's the same thing again, it's no better than it was. And then, when I saw how relatively easy it is now, even that. The agony of getting pregnant and literally not being able to tell people about it because you would lose your job or get thrown out of school, and having to raise \$600 when you don't have any money so you can get to Puerto Rico or Pennsylvania.

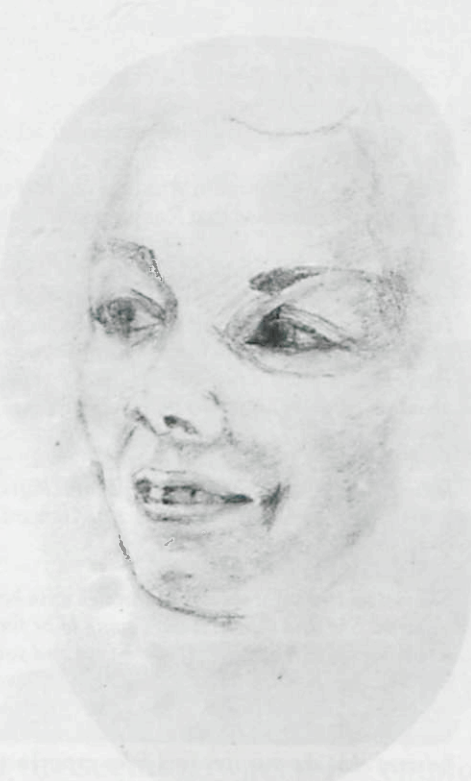
Were abortions legal in Pennsylvania?

Oh no. The first abortion I had... it was Thanksgiving, you were having your tonsils out, remember?

Yes.

Anyway, he was a very kind old man in a tiny little town in Pa. The story was that his daughter,

years before, had got pregnant and had come to him for an abortion. He was an MD. He refused to do one and she went to some butcher and died from a haemorrhage. I asked him if it was true and he said yes. They kept arresting him, and putting him in goal. When he got out he would just go



somewhere else and continue doing cheap abortions. So, finally I thought that at least, at the level of the physical event, it's a lot better. But I really experienced the agony of deciding whether it was a good thing or not.

For me it was a question of seeing that I talked myself into situations. If I put enough energy into this thing it'll happen even while I shut myself off consciously to it, so I'm not aware that I'm doing it. I also feel that I'm more responsible in my relationship with Vee, the way I react.

What do you mean? Do you mean that before you were just having a good time?

Sort of. I feel that's a milestone I got around. I took the hard way, but I got over, and I feel I got over it early and quick.

Well, if it works that way it certainly took me a long time to get around it.

I actually got excited about two weeks before my abortion when Roxy rang me up and said she was pregnant. Then it was easier, knowing a friend of mine was also going through the same thing. It wasn't me being separated from everybody else and going through pain. It was Roxy and I doing this thing with people supporting us, and it was going to be okay and fine. It relieved me, too. But it also made me feel bad because I thought it was a dumb way to celebrate your coming of age.

I don't really think it's coming of age. I still think of myself as a child in a lot of ways and I wouldn't say it was me becoming anything else. But I can really see how Roxy has changed. She's so much more adult and sensitive in new ways, and so much more responsible.

And you think that's the result of her having an abortion?

Yes, because her mother has loosened up with her. She says, Roxy this is what I think, but I know if I say no you'll do it anyway so we'll

have to work out where we agree. Roxy will agree and accept the responsibility for what she wants to do

But it's not exclusively a change in her. It's also a change in her mother.

Yes. In a lot of ways.

I wonder how it changed me. I guess I've been examining those feelings that I repressed about my abortions and pregnancy. I still don't have them very straight. Let's see, there were three abortions - Mexico, Puerto Rico and Pennsylvania. Every once in a while I think, what if I had children besides you. It would be a zoo.

I would really hate it!

It seems that having so many kids without a husband would be really difficult.

It is. I'm sure it is.

And yet I wouldn't want to be married to the fathers.

Sometimes I would sit and fantasise what the child would look like, but it was purely a game that I've played since I was little. Once in a while I'd write names down, but it was a game and I knew it, so it didn't have much emotional content.

How can it not have emotional content? I just can't believe...

But I don't want a child. It was like drawing a picture. I didn't feel any regret. Like when you're little, you say I'm going to have twins and one will be a boy and one a girl and they'll be blonde. It's like two dolls.

When I was pregnant and I knew I was going to have an abortion it was like being inhabited by an alien presence that had some hold on me and if possible was going to ruin my life.

God, Mother!

I felt a little like that when I was pregnant with you.

I am an alien presence that's trying to ruin your life... I felt pregnant but I never... I always knew I was going to have an abortion so I didn't think of it as a person with a soul, more like an old overcoat, and since I knew the soul was never going to enter that embryo, I didn't feel any conflict about this thing being in me. It never became a person in my mind. What I really disliked was, oh... I know this will sound vain, but I hated gaining weight and I disliked feeling grouchy and tired in the morning. There were times when I felt satisfied, but I also felt I had to wait until this was over to get back to myself again. Also I really hated what was happening to Vee and me during the month after. I felt I was being punished.

By him?

No. We couldn't make love and, like, well you get pregnant and have an abortion. You have to go through it and learn what you're supposed to learn.

You know I was somewhat relieved when you started fucking because you had told me that you didn't masturbate, and you seemed generally non-erotic. I feared maybe you were going to be frigid or asexual.

What's asexual?

It means, well, frigidity is when there's a pretty intense interest in sexuality but some kind of a block that prevents satisfaction. Asexual is the absence of the interest. So, that first week when you and Vee... god, how can you describe it?

Well, he came over but that...

When you described that I felt relieved. I felt... I felt embarrassed because you were laughing so much.

Well, it was hysterical. I was amazed too. I never had any intimate conversations with my mother, so although we have had intimate conversations, it's always been me telling you about things. So ►

when you started telling me about your sexual experiences I thought, wait a minute, you don't tell this to your mother! I identified with my relationship with my mother instead of my relationship with you. It seemed really funny to me when I realized that.

I was just worried that you were anxious about your body, and that maybe you didn't want to touch it. Or that maybe you thought sex was disgusting.

But then I asked Roxy and she didn't and we ... Wait, she didn't masturbate?

Right, and we talked about it and said, well, are we weird? And we decided that no, it just wasn't exciting. We tried it, but it was like sticking our fingers in our ears.

I like to stick my fingers in my ears, and in John's ears, and your ears, too!

(Sticks finger in April's ear.)

Mother, you are weird!

Well, I don't think masturbation is better, but I wonder if there's some generational difference. My generation was the first one for whom it became all right, so there were n't books on how to masturbate. When I was fifteen and sixteen I thought it was bad and that sex outside of marriage was wrong ... so masturbation must be wrong too.

When we were talking, Roxy and I tried to discover the difference, and we decided the excitement was from being with someone, even if they just had their arms around you, it was more satisfying. It was the personal contact that did it. It wasn't like sitting on a rocking horse, it was the two people that made it good:

This may sound silly, but until I found out I was pregnant, I still felt like I was a virgin. I felt it was a kind of innocence that didn't necessarily end with the breaking of, ah, your hymen.

Your hymen?

You know, popping the cherry or whatever.

Isn't that awful. I just hate the sound of that.

You know, the Greeks had beautiful songs that were hymns to the hymen ... Sappho ...

Yes. 'Oh hymen, hymeneae ...' It's like the idea of having your first period and your whole family gets together and has a party.

What! I never heard of that.

I do remember reading in some magazine about a commune in San Francisco where they would have a cake and a party when a girl had her first period.

If anyone had done that to me I'd have shouted at them.

But you might feel better about all those side effects if it was a subject for celebration instead of being a periodic nuisance.

I doubt it. I think it's a little silly.

Well, maybe so, but that's because all those events that are specifically female have just never been a subject for celebration in Western culture.

No one has a party because a boy's voice is breaking.

The Jews do. What do you think a Bar Mitzvah is?

I think it's nuts.

Here's something else, though. I thought I'd got my feelings about the abortion pretty well taken care of in relation to you, and I thought I understood your feelings towards me about it. But when Joy came and she wrote to all your friends with great excitement that I'd had an abortion. I really felt I was being put on show.

What do you mean, all my friends?

She wrote to Sharon and Diane and David and to anyone that knew me, and she wrote on postcards.

On postcards!

With exclamation marks, saying here's the

latest news, and I remember saying that I felt uncomfortable and you and Joy laughed and said it was a status symbol, and I felt really like ...

Exposed?

Yes. Exposed. But also a bit like someone was throwing mud on me.

I can understand. It would make me feel like that too.

Yes. Well, now I understand a lot more.

I found myself telling everyone about it.

Do you think by this article we're doing that?

Yes.

Well, I think Roxy's mum will find out and it will be a relief to know that Roxy isn't the only weirdo.

I'll tell you about the day I felt worst. I was just so absorbed by my own misery. I thought how selfish I was to be focusing on myself because you were the one who was going to have the abortion. Anyway, Pat called that day. I just told her I was worried about you, and she said a few things about what it means to be a parent. It changed my feelings and from that day I felt better all the time instead of feeling worse. That's when it occurred to me that it was my first experience of projecting, towards you.

What did she say?

She just told me what she'd gone through with her children. She said that kids were going to be flat on their faces in the mud half of the time and you just had to pick them up and wipe them off and send them out into the world again. That's not the metaphor she used, but words to that effect, and I believed that she was speaking from experience, which she was, and that really made me feel a lot better.

I also thought I was pregnant.

At the same time?

Yes. And the fact that I wasn't and you were, when I wanted to be pregnant so badly, seemed to me sort of a terrible cosmic joke.

How awful. Although, I hate to be selfish, but I'm glad I was pregnant instead of you.

How so?

I don't want a younger brother or sister at all.

Well, you're going to move out.

I know, but still ... I'd be really jealous.

I don't know ... maybe you'd be relieved.

Are you afraid of not having another child?

Yes. I'm profoundly afraid. I don't quite know.

I'm not exactly the age of childbearing, but I wouldn't want to have a baby after forty or so. I don't know, maybe I would.

All these feelings co-exist. It's like, well, I also believe that I'll be happily married to some man that I can work with and that the incredible yearning I've had all my life for this union will be fulfilled. But at another place, I think maybe I won't and that my complete self will be adequate and that I'm moving very close to that now.

I guess I thought getting knocked-up is how you get married.

You know how to make me feel good.

Well, maybe we should talk about that. We've never really opened it up.

What happened? You found out that you were pregnant, and you told Daddy? And he said I guess we better get married?

No. It was an immediate assumption, we didn't even discuss it. I've always said to myself that he trapped me and that he was pleased because he knew I was going away to college and leaving him behind. I thought I was leaving the scene I had hated so much, which had always inhibited me and made me miserable. When I found out I was pregnant it meant that I was stuck there. Not just stuck in my parents' reality, in Eugene, Oregon, but in that altogether unsatisfying relationship

and that unsatisfying life. I completely collapsed, had a real nervous break down.

A real nervous break down ... for how long?

It was acute for about a month. Then I just took all that agony and disappointment and put it away. I literally put it in a box with all the papers that were associated with going to university and I put it away in a dark closet.

Oh Momma, that's awful.

It was horrible. What made it really awful was that nobody else was aware of it.

Or could understand if you told them ...

I felt there was no way I could communicate it to your father because I didn't want him to know about it, but at the same time there'd be no way for him to understand it if I did tell him.

And you got married in September?

We got married the end of September. I kept putting it off ... I held on for as long as I could ... or is that true? I always think that I did, but I'm not sure now if I actually did or not. It was a big secret, you know, no one was supposed to know about it.

Did the family know?

It seemed pretty obvious. A rather sudden change of plans ... everyone knew how much I wanted to go to university. But everyone pretended it wasn't true, including me, and that made me really crazy.

But wasn't I a month late?

You were a month late. It was very nice of you.

(Laugh)

Anytime. I'm always late.

And that made it a lot easier. I thought if I can just get through this, when she ... no, when 'he' is born I'll die and it'll be over with. It didn't ever occur to me that you would die

(Laughter from both)

What would happen to me and daddy?

Oh, I don't know.

That didn't matter?

Not too much. I just wanted you all off my back.

(More laughter)

So what happened to change your mind ... that you didn't die?

I didn't. That's what happened to change my mind.

Oh, it wasn't like ...

I didn't change my mind and then not die. I just didn't die. So I figured that I guessed I was wrong.

So you were still sort of pissed off and unhappy, until then?

Until a couple of weeks before you were born, I guess. I was miserable until just before you were born, and then the event of the birth ... it was incredible ... the first time that I had ever been wholly engaged in any activity, you know, physically and emotionally, and intellectually ... everything, all parts, were completely there giving birth. I actually felt wonderful. I didn't feel any conflict about my relationship with you after you were born. You were so wonderful, April. I just can't tell you. But boy, I sure felt it when I was pregnant. Whew ... I would stand in the shower and just cry, every morning.

When I was pregnant I would stand in the shower and cry and not look in the mirror because my stomach looked so awful, so lumpy. I mean, I always loved the way pregnant women looked. I was annoyed that I couldn't look pregnant, it was just this nasty stage when I looked really fat.

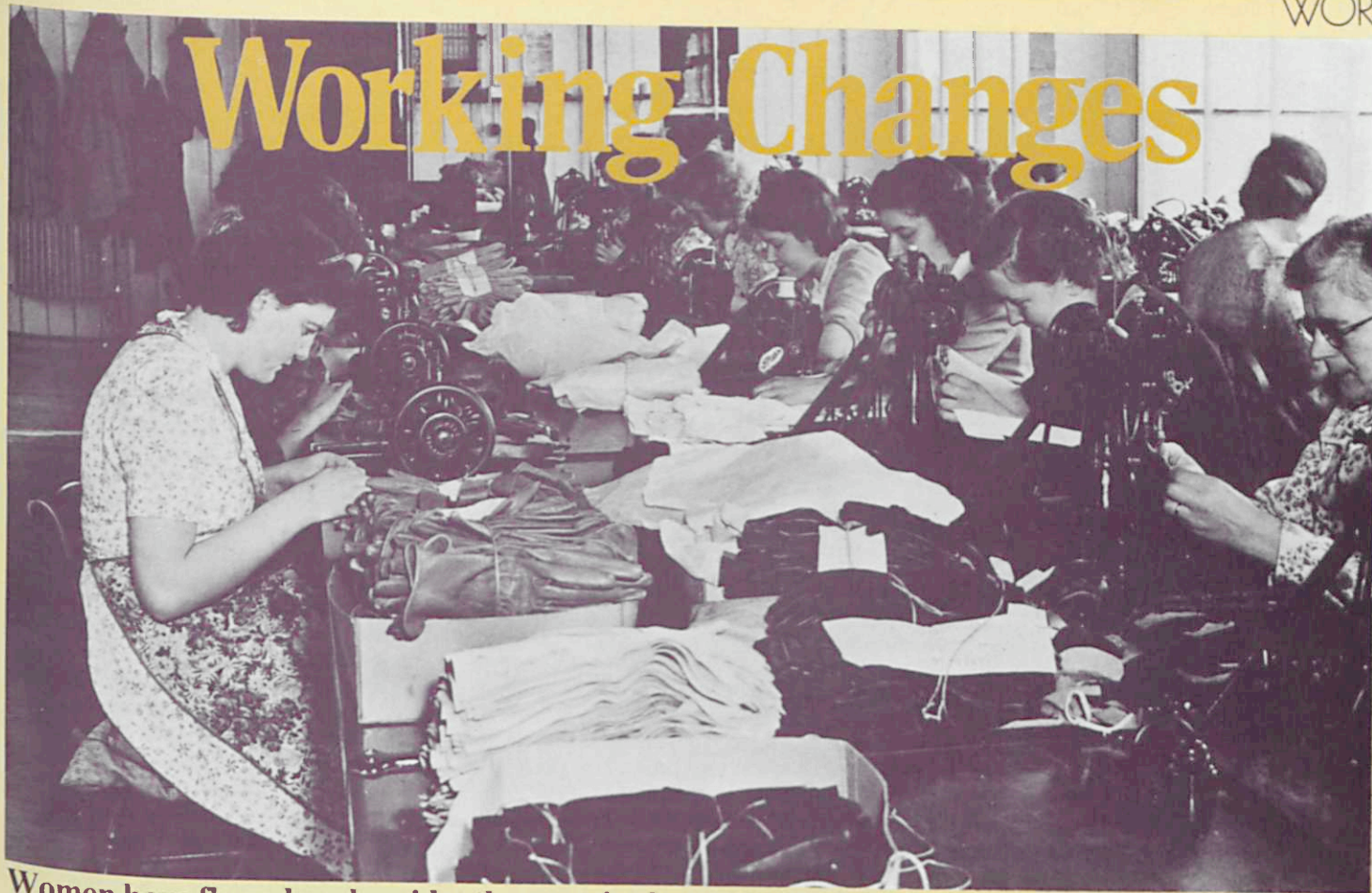
You want all the fun and none of the responsibility.

Right. Exactly.

Have we finished now. Do you think we've covered the important parts?

Yes ●

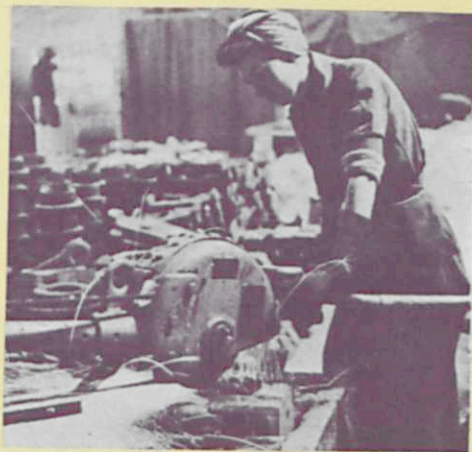
Working Changes



Women have floundered amidst the seemingly perverse employment tides created by the nature of capital. During two world wars women were swept in to run the machinery and produce the goods in the absence of men sent off soldiering. Each time, as most women were washed back into the family by the return of the male labour force, they left traces of their presence, the residue of struggles to resist their exploitation as low paid women workers.

The First World War:
'The National Federation of Women Workers convened a conference which called for equal pay for equal work, training, security against unemployment after the war, and for women to join trade unions. Many unions opened up their doors to women for the first time, including the railway workers, the bakers, and the bank workers. Women's membership in unions went up from 4000,000 to over a million.'

Socialist Woman



Woman engineer

Between the Wars

The winds of the depression blow in, pushing men out of work and onto the streets. It is cheaper for the employers to use women to work for them and impossible for men to do anything about it. Often the wife is the breadwinner for her husband and family. Too late now to regret that the equal pay demand had been more or less ignored.

The Second World War

Only women who *replace* men are given the right to equal pay. Employers erode the ideas behind the demand for equal pay by arguing that women need more supervision. More unions forced to accept women members.

After the War

The selective ban on married women workers done away with. Royal Commission on Equal Pay, 1944, said that women were generally supported by men, only seldom did equal work, and pointed out the 'costs to the country'. The surge of women white collar

workers into the labour force increases. Women teachers can demonstrate they do equal work.

In 1955 the government acknowledges that women non-manual workers should receive equal pay after more middle class women achieve careers in the public sector. Equal Opportunity for women remains buried under the sand.

1968

The Ford strike – over equal pay and grading – and the formation of a National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights. NJACCQER, before it fell apart after 18 months, culminated in an equal pay demo in London in 1969 and the introduction of the Equal Pay Bill by the Labour government. A wishy washy Bill, with the definition of 'equal pay for equal

work' instead of 'equal pay for work of equal value'. The five year time span allowed for implementation of the Act enables employers to wring out the full benefits for themselves of such a definition, dry and stiffen them with special job evaluations to maintain discrimination.

What are the Facts and Figures?

The average earnings of a paid woman worker are little more than half that of men. Training for girl school leavers is miniscule compared to that of boys.

Yet, over half the total number of women between the ages of 15-60 work in paid employment. Just under half the total number of mothers with dependent children work in paid employment.

2.4 million of paid women workers are organised in trade unions, but of the 23 unions with more women members than men, only 10 sent women delegates to the 1972 trade union congress.

'The battle for equal pay and equal opportunity is being fought on the shop floor – and if the women aren't represented there, we are never going to get off the ground.'

Pat Turner,

National Woman Officer of the General and Municipal Workers Union

'Women have been joining unions in the last few years at twice the rate of men, but all this has been almost despite the attitudes of male union members and officials. Once in, the chances are that women's particular demands will be the first to be dropped by union officials.'

Irene Bruegel, ASTMS ►

Woman servicing train at Victoria



photo - Rob Gotobed

What Now?

Turbulence and action. While property speculators are groaning about their disappearing market, the rich are apparently neglecting Sotheby's art auctions in the rush to buy diamonds for security, and to sit in the tube surrounded by newspaper headlines and other conversations, it's as if the stock market crash has made no noise at all. Women in the traditionally low paid, female jobs are, however, becoming increasingly militant - nurses, teachers, social workers, hospital technicians. The threat is that wage controls will be tightened and unemployment will increase.

Women are no longer silent about their labour in the family, they are no longer unaware of the way the separation between the home and work, and their responsibility for child care, perpetuates their inequality.

The Working Women's Charter, which made its first appearance at the now defunct London Trades Council in March this year, pulls together the two aspects of women's lives. It sets out a series of ten demands which start from an understanding of the way a woman's life is. It can be put to unions to force men out of the sticky moralism which conceals the way they benefit from women's inferior position. It can be used to disentangle many of the jumbles about why women don't join trade unions.

'Most of us who have tried to get women's questions discussed in unions have been the subject of condescending attitudes on the part of men. Often women who actually get to branch meetings find themselves the only woman there, faced with an intimidating set of rules and procedures which often appear to be designed to prevent anything getting decided as well as facing benevolent paternalism from the men. In most cases men don't want to appear male chauvinists and will not argue against their new 'charming young sister', they often allow resolutions to be passed with no opposition and then through the usual bureaucratic manoeuvres ensure that nothing actually gets done. On one occasion I got my union branch to accept that unmarried as well as married lecturers should be entitled to

maternity leave, not without having to face banter about my sex life and the propensity of unmarried lecturers at the college to 'fall'. As far as I know, 18 months later, maternity leave has not yet been won for unmarried teachers in that particular education authority.'

Irene Breugel, writing about the Working Women's Charter. She became involved in proposing the Charter to the Camden Trades Council, to which she is a delegate. She continues:

'Women who have tried to organise in unions have also encountered a strong reactionary streak amongst the union hierarchy and the officials including a fair number of women in these positions who actively reinforce the tokenism of the branch and work place. For example, while the hierarchy may well organise women's meetings, they make sure they do most of the speaking and do their level best to prevent any decisions being made. They also tend to oppose the idea of women from different branches getting together on a more permanent basis because they realise that it is in this way that women will be able to challenge them more effectively. The Charter Campaign, however, sees it as particularly important that women in unions should get together on their own terms, and not those of union hierarchy. It is through Charter meetings that we aim to be able to build our confidence in challenging backward attitudes in unions and to provide ourselves with the organisational support to do so.

The Charter has already been adopted by a number of union branches and taken from there to at least twelve local trades councils around the country, including six in London, and Manchester, Sheffield, Colchester and Coventry. In the main, the branches initiating the Charter have been in white collar unions. It is hoped that by taking the Charter to Trades Council backed meetings to get the Charter discussed, adopted and fought for in manual unions as well, where the position of women is markedly worse than amongst white collar workers.

Trades Councils, which are basically local forums of union branches, cannot take

action themselves, but can be useful in sponsoring activities in the localities. In Hackney, a sub-committee of the Trades Council is investigating the position of sweated labour in that area under the auspices of the Charter campaign and, in Camden, the possibility of a campaign around nursery provision and nursery nurses' conditions is being considered by a similar sub-committee.

The Charter aims to get more than token support for women's demands. Its concern is to build support for their realisation. It recognises that the unions have the power to win significant gains for women but will not do so unless women effectively organize themselves within them to press for their own demands. The Charter is not seen as the last word in demands for working women. Indeed, there are many proposals for amendments of detail - for paternity leave, creches at work with parental control and so on - but the exact wording of the Charter is not seen as the most important thing at present. We see it primarily as a mean of opening up the long overdue discussion of women workers' demands at the place of work and as a means of involving men and women in the fight for these.'

Since the surfacing of the Charter in March, there have been lots of meetings - one every two weeks for the organising committee and one a month for larger, public meetings - to discuss both the wording of the Charter and its implementation. By the time a meeting was called in July, in Jockey Fields, London, a fair number of women knew about it, and the meeting was advertised in the general press. This meeting was to formalise the structure of the organising committee on a delegate basis of some kind. At it, the following proposals were accepted:

1. Membership should be on a delegate basis. Non-delegates may attend meetings etc. in a non-voting capacity, and receive information etc as supports for a fee of 50p per annum.
2. Delegates should be from affiliated organisations. These shall be:
 - a. Trade Union branches
 - b. Shopfloor or similar groups
 - c. Trades Councils
 - d. Any other organisation which the delegate body accepts as being in a position to mobilise effectively on the demands of the Charter except political parties.
3. A meeting for London delegates to be held in September. Such a meeting to elect an administrative committee.

For the two months, from July until September, the organising committee is carrying on in its ad hoc present form, until proportional representation can be discussed and decided upon at the public meeting for London in September. Write to: Working Women's Charter Campaign, 10 Alwayne Rd, London N.7. for further information.

The wording of the Charter has already, for instance, been amended considerably by the Hackney Trades Council, but it was felt necessary to have national agreement on the basic wording until the Charter can be amended in the light of experiences of women trade unionists throughout the country. A meeting to gather together delegates from all over the country to amend the Charter will probably be held in Autumn this year.

Marsha Rowe

Working Womens Charter

We pledge ourselves to agitate and organise to achieve the following aims:

1. The rate for the job, regardless of sex, at rates negotiated by the trade unions, with a national minimum wage below which no wages should fall.
2. Equal opportunity of entry into occupations and in promotion, regardless of sex and marital state.
3. Equal education and training for all occupations and compulsory day release for all 16-19 year olds in employment.
4. Working conditions to be, without deterioration of previous conditions, the same for women as for men.
5. The removal of all legal and bureaucratic impediments to equality eg, with regard to tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, control over children, social security payments, hire-purchase agreements.
6. Improved provision of local authority day nurseries, free of charge, with extended hours to suit working mothers. Provision of nurseries with day classes. More nursery schools.
7. 18 weeks maternity leave with full net pay before and after the birth of a live child; 7 weeks after birth if the child is stillborn. No dismissal during pregnancy or maternity leave. No loss of security, pension or promotion prospects.
8. Family planning clinics supplying free contraception to be extended to cover every locality. Free abortion to be readily available.
9. Family allowance to be increased to £2.50 per child, including the first child.
10. To campaign among women to take an active part in the trade unions and in political life so that they may exercise influence commensurate with their numbers and to campaign among men trade unionists that they may work to achieve this aim.



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Session II

Before the second session began I decided to carry on the discussion of the visuals. Many of the boys had talked about their selections the previous week. I thought "if we carry on I have a device for gently toning down the dominance of the boys and allowing the girls to express their interests on the topic". So I began this session by asking if one of the girls would volunteer to talk about her selection of photographs. This was met with nearly ten minutes silence broken into nine brief sequences interspersed with coughing, whisperings, scuffling, and clearing of throats.

Finally I asked, "Who is starting?"



Eileen said: "I chose this picture because I thought it showed all the **disaster** and **bitterness** that war has caused. . . ."

I then asked Eileen to repeat again why she chose the photograph.

Eileen: "Because I thought it showed all the **destruction** and **bitterness** war has caused."

Dick challenged her: "You just said something different."

Laughter.

Eileen: "What?"

Dick: "... said something different. . . ."

Eileen: "I did not."

Dick: "**Disaster** and **destruction** is different."

Eileen: "Well, it's. . . ."

Dick: "... murmur."

Eileen: "Oh well, it doesn't really matter why I chose it anyway."

Laughter:

Eileen: "It shows a bit, you know, it shows how what a waste. . . what a waste of time, you know. The time spent building this house and then it just gets, in a few . . . in a second, just burned to pieces you know it's a waste."

I attempted to involve the rest of the group in discussing the photographs Eileen had chosen.

Three short silences followed.

I then asked if she would like to ask people in the group questions about it.

Eileen asked Maria.

Laughter.

Maria responded: "What was the question?"

Eileen commented: "You rotten lot."

I asked what the second photograph she selected was and after three seconds silence attempt-

ed to initiate a discussion on how the woman in it would have felt at that particular time.

Boy: "Heartbroken."

Boy: "Mm, heartbroken."

Girl: "Cos everything she's had she's lost."

Boy: "Grief-stricken."

Boy: "As a war picture really, it don't convey much at all."

Girl: "It does."

. . . mutterings (inaudible).

Boy: "It just looks like a . . ." (inaudible).

Me: "But the point doesn't seem to me there to be doing justice to Eileen's opinion, because she says it conveys a lot to her about the nature of war."

Boy: "... (inaudible) . . . all right"

4 seconds silence.

Boy: "There don't seem to be much action in it."

Girl: "It's shown after the action."

Boy: "It's all been . . . it's all gone."

Girl: "All the action's been hasn't it?"

Me: "So you're saying it shows the result of action in a sense . . . what happened after the action."

Girl: "It shows the grief and sorrow. . . ."

Silence and inaudible whisperings followed.

The discussion reached deadlock. As soon as Eileen had plucked up courage to take the initiative a boy called Dick came in to confront her with a critical question, from which she retreated and backed down. It was obvious from this point that he was the real leader of the boys and that Roy was only allowed to be dominant so long as it seemed there was little danger of the girls exercising initiative. She was prevented from retreating by a friend, who came in to back her up. I tried to hold her in the discussion as well. She looked for support from other girls but they 'let her down'. Hence her remark "You rotten lot". I had struggled to get some boys to comment on one of her photos but they answered grudgingly and briefly and eventually dismissed her choice as being of little value.

Eventually I called for another volunteer. Eileen felt she had shouldered enough of the responsibility, "I've done my bit". This was obviously a rebuke to some of the others. Another girl, Karen, immediately responded and talked about her photograph — an airman returning on leave and embracing his wife and child.



At first the discussion was entirely among the girls and there were individual differences of interpretation. As soon as I tried to open out the discussion the boys came in. At first it was thoughtful and reflective. For the first time at least one boy and girl began to view the material from both a 'masculine' and 'feminine' viewpoint. Perhaps the photo selected helped here.

(4) Girl: "They've been living different lives, haven't they, and now they've just joined up." 3 secs. silence.

Me: "But I think that Eileen was suggesting that, according to Linda, what ought to have happened is that man's feelings ought to have been hardened in some way. . . . to. . . ."

Girl: "Well according to what she says. I don't think they should have been. I think it's right, you know . . . yes but what she said in the last photograph, in the way that she spoke, then she should have showed that much affection, if they had been hardened . . . by the war."

(5) Boy: "Yeah, but if you get a load of people who are all humming around in aeroplanes, shooting each other down, and they all felt against killing people, the airforce would come to a grinding halt. There wouldn't be one would there?"

(6) Girl: "No, I know, but we're not on about killing the enemy, we're on about feelings with other people."

(7) Boy: "All right, right say, . . . say, if you've got some very good mates right, in the airforce and they got shot down . . . and you didn't want to fly anymore. There wouldn't be anybody to fly the aeroplanes, so."

Girl: "Well you would . . . you would fly . . . and you wouldn't be able to stop."

Girl: "Ah."

People talking at once inaudibly.

Boy: "You're saying that they would . . . (inaudible)."

All talking at once inaudibly.

(8) Girl: "Cos if they, if his mate got shot down, as he said, that'd harden him against war and against the other people, . . . shooting his plane down, but it wouldn't harden him against his wife and children."

Boy: "That's what I was saying."

Girl: "It would not . . . it would harden him against the enemy but not against their own. . . ."

Boy: "That's what I was saying."

Girl: "... country . . . yes, but she was saying in that one, it was probably some of their own country, and she said it hardened them against the feelings."

(9) Boy: "But not against their own people, no."

Girl: "Not against their husband and that, just against that sort of thing, . . . you see, shooting and that doesn't worry them any more."

I was also very pleased because twelve out of sixteen pupils in the group had participated, all seven boys and five of the nine girls.

Session III

At the beginning of the third session I handed them an agenda of the issues that had emerged from the previous two sessions and asked them to think about which they would like to inquire into first of all. To the issues raised in the first session I had added: "How does war affect human feelings?" This emerged from the discussion of the photographs selected by the girls. Then I went round the group asking each person to name two issues they would like to discuss. ►

"I was being confronted with the gap between my conception of myself and the view the male world had of me."

Angela Philips arrived back from holiday too late to do the second in the series of women talking about their experience of the women's movement, so she 'interviewed' herself.

Four years ago I was working in a photographic studio as a receptionist and general dogsbody. I was appallingly badly paid, treated with friendly indulgence and utterly exploited. Mind you, I wasn't really aware of it at the time. I was just amazed to be working at all. I had no reason to doubt my ability to get a job but somehow I had absolutely no sense of myself as an adult. I had cruised through school and college with little effort and found myself at the end of the conveyor belt without any sense of purpose or direction. I wanted to be a photographer but it didn't seem a real possibility, it was a kind of mirage which I would project everytime anyone asked me what I wanted to do. On top of that I'd been told that as a woman it would be very difficult to get a job as an assistant, which is the first step of the ladder for most photographers, so I contented myself with a job on the fringes of the world which I wanted to enter. It didn't occur to me to make a fuss about the triviality of my work; smiling at clients, making lunch and running errands.

I had no real sense of ambition because I'd always lived in the present and ambition requires a sense of the future. There was a vague feeling at the back of my mind that I would eventually get married and life would look after itself. My father had always looked after me before so presumably a husband would perform the same function. Not that I expected to be a passive respectable wife. I was far too aggressive for that but I felt no need to strive for financial security. My relationships with men up till that point had, in the main been, short, fraught, and frustrating but I simply assumed that I hadn't yet met the man able to live up to my expectations.

Fortunately, deeply ingrained bloody mindedness saved me from just copping out and doing a secretarial course. I didn't care about money, as long as I could exist I was happier doing a vaguely unconventional job which gave me some freedom than I would have been stuck behind a desk with twice the pay. By standing still at least I was keeping my options open. I had a lousy dead end job but that didn't shake my belief that I was worthy of better things. Somehow by doing nothing about my future I was able to preserve the belief that I could do anything.

Up till this time (I was 22) the women's liberation movement had meant little to me. A woman at college had joined one of the first groups and she used to talk about it quite often. I listened with polite interest but it never dawned on me that I could have been personally involved. I was totally apolitical. The year was 1969, the height of the student movement, tucked away in a technical college in the Elephant and Castle we might as well have been on a different planet. I had no involvement in the real world. My attitude was totally individualistic, I believed that women

were equal to men. Or rather it had never occurred to me to think otherwise. When I occasionally heard people making derogatory remarks about women I was outraged because obviously those remarks reflected on me, but I was blind and deaf to subtle forms of discrimination. I could see that women had a separate role in society, a role to which I had always conformed to the best of my ability. I just didn't see that it was an inferior role.

After working for a few months I met Jane. I was introduced to her by a friend of mine who said. 'You won't get on with my cousin, she's far too intelligent.'

It was the first time in years that I'd met a woman who wasn't afraid of being seen to be clever and was at the same time warm, friendly and not the slightest bit intimidating. It was through her that I went to my first group meeting.

It is difficult to describe the unique quality of that first meeting and I remember very little of what was said. I arrived late and walked, rather nervously, into a room full of women. Most of them were in their twenties and they seemed very articulate and far more knowledgeable about everything than I was. It was a new group so many of the other women must have been feeling nervous but I got the impression that they all had some kind of extra knowledge that I didn't have. After a while I dared to venture a suggestion and everyone listened to me with just as much attention as they had given to the others. I was delighted, I had stumbled quite accidentally into a whole new world where women actually attempted to communicate and frustration was not something to be nursed in black depression but a common subject to be discussed. I was already hooked on the atmosphere, although after the first meeting the meaning of it all had not really sunk into my mind.

The next morning I went to work and blithely announced that I'd been to a women's liberation meeting the night before. What response did I expect? Interest I think, or perhaps mild amusement. I certainly didn't expect what I got. My boss and his assistant proceeded to argue vehemently, making it quite clear that they believed that women were inherently inferior to men. I was utterly amazed. For the first time I was being confronted with the gap between my conception of myself and the view the male world had of me. I think if the man who had first confronted me on the subject had been someone I respected the effect might have been different. Coming from someone whose only talent was sticking boxes on a table and making pictures of them, this attitude of male superiority was little short of ridiculous. He did me a great service by crystallising the meaning of sexism. I knew he was talking bullshit but he believed it so probably other men believed in it too. The next week I returned to the meeting with a rather clearer



idea of what it was about.

The initial affect on my life was fairly superficial. I was certainly becoming a great deal more sensitive to the daily round of insults that women have to put up with. My eyes had been opened but I wasn't yet making much sense of what I saw. Right from the beginning I threw myself into everything that was happening. I was pleased to find a new outlet for my energy but most of all I enjoyed the new found feeling of solidarity. I had always been fairly isolated and suddenly I was surrounded with friends. Working in a group gave me the support I wanted. I dared to do things because I was no longer solely responsible for my actions; successes were joint successes and failures joint failures.

Gradually the process of understanding my condition as a female became the most important part of my life. The new found awareness provided me with the missing link with the 'real world'. I began to see myself as an independent human being and new attitudes to myself and society began to reshape my whole life. I gave up any idea of going into the glossy world of fashion and advertising and cut my last links with it all when I was sacked in July 1972 and forced to try and make my way as a freelance photojournalist.

For three years now I've been dismantling my mind, rethinking my ideas. It hasn't all been easy, for a year I could hardly talk to a man without losing my temper. I couldn't cope with their lack of understanding.

Living a woman centred life brings problems of its own. Particularly if you still feel heterosexual. There have been times when I used to wish I'd never heard of the Women's Liberation Movement, but not anymore. The pieces are gradually falling together again and I can't imagine what or where I'd be without it.

NEWS

900 women came together in Edinburgh at the end of June for the sixth national women's liberation conference, talked, danced while the Northern Women's Liberation Rock Band played for the first time, ate, talked some more, adopted two more demands for the movement:

"We demand legal and financial independence for women."

"We demand an end to all discrimination against lesbians and the right of all women to a self-defined sexuality."

The impressions here try to look at what Edinburgh meant to a few of the women there.

WOMEN TOGETHER: EDINBURGH

1 As a whole the conference seemed very much like a working conference

I found the atmosphere relaxed and friendly, certainly much more so than at Bristol last year. I had expected that there would be a confrontation between the radical feminists, arguing for separatism and sexual relations only with women, and the rest, but this did not really materialise. The workshop that I attended on lesbianism – which was supposed to raise some questions about the differences between lesbians and non-lesbians and how we could work together – was quite productive. Women spoke about the ways in which they felt threatened by each other, straights by lesbians and vice versa, in some detail. This was very useful as a preliminary to discussing political separatism and how all women could work on campaigns around discrimination against lesbians. There was more open discussion about sex and sexuality than at previous national conferences. The main thing that I thought

was good about the conference was that we had a much more realistic idea of what you could achieve in short workshops talking to women whom you probably wouldn't see again for some time. Most of the workshops that I attended – on psychiatry, medicine and the welfare state – took the form of swapping information and discussing actions in different parts of the country and how to widen them or make them complementary to each other. It was more realistic than trying to turn every workshop into a consciousness-raising session where people say anything that comes into their head about the topic in question. There seemed to be an awful lot going on all over the country, and there was so much to discuss in the medicine and psychiatry workshops that weekend conferences specifically devoted to each of these were planned.

A common theme that ran through all the workshops I attended was the relationship between clients of and workers in social welfare and health services, between patients and doctors and nurses, between the victims of psychiatrists and mental institutions and women social workers. Was it possible to work

politically on feminist issues as a state employee – say a social worker – and if so, how would this link up with claimants union's activities? Could women's groups be established in hospitals incorporating auxiliary workers, nurses, health visitors as well as medical students? How could we combine creating our own alternatives, like self-examination groups, with campaigns around NHS provisions?

Most people seemed to think that we should try to work both to create alternatives and to attack the system from within as workers and without as clients. There was quite a lot of scepticism though of women getting professional jobs like that of social worker or psychiatrist, which put them in a position of power over other women whether they liked it or not, and which gave them a personal stake in their own status and step in the hierarchy.

This questioning of getting professional jobs could also have included teachers who are in an analogous position to social workers, in teaching ideology, and operating a selective system that reproduces and preserves both the class and the sexual division of labour in this country. But even though so many of the women in the women's movement are

teachers, very few seem to question their own position in the education system, nor even find it contradictory: the issues that were discussed about social workers, doctors and shrinks never seemed to come up in the "women and education" workshops.

As a whole the conference seemed very much like a working conference, with everyone very aware that there was a lot to be done, and a lot of theory to be developed, but that we had successfully started on it.

2 Broad areas of women's oppression have hitherto found no place in the movement's statement of its aims

One workshop discussed the proposal for a demand for legal and financial independence for women. A paper written by some sisters from Oxford and High Wycombe outlined some of the theoretical implications of the demand, and areas for

campaigning.

The workshop was well attended, and the proposed demand enthusiastically received - there was less criticism than those preparing the paper had anticipated. Women pointed out in discussion that the demand covered broad areas of women's oppression - particularly in relation to "social welfare" services and state taxation and pension schemes, which had hitherto found no place in the movement's public statement of its most basic aims. By having a demand on these issues, and working on them as WLM campaigns, rather than as local individual endeavours, we could hopefully come to a clearer understanding of the ways in which women are oppressed in their relations within the family and the state "welfare" system. We could also work for practical, short-term changes in the position of women. There was little discussion of the potential long-term implications of the demand on marriage itself, and family structure, as we know them; however, the demand is new, and there will be time for such discussions locally and nationally, both immediately and as the result of future campaigns. The workshop decided, unanimously, to present the

proposed demand for acceptance as a new demand of the WLM to the plenary session. Perhaps we should have considered merely presenting a resolution that the proposal be discussed locally, with a view to voting to accept the demand at the next national conference. In the event, the plenary session did accept the demand, but with almost no discussion beforehand, and at a time when many fewer than half of the sisters attending the conference were present in the hall. We hope the fact that so few sisters were present when the demand was agreed on will not matter too much in the long-term, because we hope that more detailed discussion and practical campaigns will take place locally. The important thing now is that the demand should be worked on; in that way, its importance will become clearer to us.

Some of the sisters involved in writing the conference paper are going to organise a one-day conference in the autumn. This will give an opportunity for more detailed discussion on the theory behind the demand, and the way to get campaigns off the ground. Anyone interested should contact **Leonora Wilson, 21 Castle Street, High Wycombe.**

Lesley Gilbert,
Oxford women's group.

3 The classic structure that identifies itself with politics could very well be dead for women

The conference had its moments of absolute joy for us, in spite of frantic attempts by women in the "left" to organise us into oblivion. Fortunately it's becoming more evident that women do not need the excuse of contrived conferences, that the tedious male (left, right, middle etc.) need to realize the power of our movement. The classic structure that identifies itself with "politics" could very well be dead for women, to be replaced with something that is in keeping with our Instinctive Feminism. Men even imitate themselves badly, it would seem senseless to imitate that imitation.

The women at Farraday Road, who organised the disco, and the Manchester women's band gave to the women at the conference what no workshop or plenary session could ever hope to do, they made it possible for us to simply enjoy being with each other.

For three days 900 women came to a conference, became separatists, and went "home" on Monday morning.

Maybe next year 10,000 women will come to a conference, become separatists, and decide that they are home.

Home is where women are.
The effect could be shattering.

Faith McDevitt

4 The music was completely created by women

We had worked quite hard to get things together for Edinburgh; it was to be our debut and we were looking forward to it but we couldn't have anticipated the experience itself; it was incredible. The power and energy generated at women's conferences is almost too much. That is why all women's socials are as important as the workshops - to capture the spirit of the conference.

Too often the sexism of popular and progressive music invades and insults the occasion, marring the experience of just being with other women. We felt the need to use music as a force for us to express the new feelings, relationships and attitudes

towards each other that we are trying to create in the women's movement.

We collected together and worked on a few songs that had some meaning for us, like Jimmy Cliff's "You can get it if you really want", as well as some songs that have come out of the movement, like Susan Straightarrow's "Marge's Song", and some that members of the group have written themselves. We were trying to develop a sound that was strong but not heavy.

Up on stage we felt tentative - it was our first major performance and we were not confident about how things would go down. After the first number we could feel the audience really with us: we were infected by their enthusiasm: together we seemed to create an atmosphere that was electric, indescribable. We felt really happy. The music was no longer merely ours in the group, it was everybody's and we all wanted it. Looking out over the hall all we could see was a forest of waving hands and the applause and general din was terrific. Energy and enthusiasm seemed to be pouring out of people.

How did we feel? We shared that specially elated feeling that we all seemed to get from that social because this time the music was completely created by women; the music was ours, we weren't dependent on sounds created by men. We also got a lot of satisfaction after all the work we'd put in, knowing that it had all been worthwhile.

But the experience was also in some ways bewildering; for the rest of the time we'd just been taking part in the conference like everyone else, anonymous figures milling around and now there we were, part of the social, part of it in a particular way. We could see our friends dancing but we weren't dancing with them because we were playing. At times it felt as if all the forces generated at the social were focussed on us and it was a bit overpowering. Since then, in order to cope with the experience, we have felt the need to assess our relationship as a group to the people for whom we are playing. In the world of pop, performers are idealised as superstars, in turn they look down on and manipulate the audience. Out of the movement we hope that a new type of relationship is developing in which there is no alienation between group and audience. We don't want to be performers, we are really only women from the movement: the movement has created us and the music we make: we have merely worked on it and play it.

**Northern Women's
Liberation Rock Band**

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Women's employment since the sixties

It is often argued that women workers are used as a reserve army of labour: being drawn into the labour force when full employment creates shortages of labour and pushed back into the home when unemployment rises and the demand for labour falls. Here we look at what actually happened to women's employment in broad terms during the years of relatively high unemployment in the late 60s and early 70s.

The idea that women workers are a reserve army of labour implies two things about the labour market. Firstly that where unemployed male labour exists, employers will always tend to give preference to men over women. Secondly that the major factor influencing women working outside the home is the availability of jobs.

There are in fact a number of reasons for supposing this view provides an over simple picture. Whilst it is true that ever since the end of the Second World War there has been strong political pressure exerted through government and unions to minimise the level of male unemployment in the country, definitions of men's work and women's work have remained relatively inflexible; not least because of much lower rates of women's pay. Thus where a traditionally male industry is declining and the expanding industries employ predominantly female labour, high male unemployment is unlikely to bring about a substitution of male for female labour. Take for example the situation in traditional fishing areas where the numbers of fishermen have been declining, and fish finger factories employing mainly women have been expanding.

In addition, although it is true that more efforts are made by employers and government to attract women into the labour force at times and in areas of labour shortages (eg the use by the Department of Employment in recent years of mobile caravans touring estates to talk to housewives in

areas of high demand for labour), there are many other factors influencing women's choice of whether to work outside the home. Many women will be under the greatest pressure to find a job precisely when husbands are unemployed or unable, because of slack demand, to work overtime.

But perhaps the most misleading aspect of the argument about women workers as a reserve army is that it reinforces the incorrect view that employment for women is always subsidiary and temporary. This view perpetuates both lack of training and low pay for women workers and the traditional sex division of labour and responsibility within the family. For over half of all housewives, excluding those with pre-school children (for whom the proportion is only about one-fifth), have paid employment outside the home, and the proportion is still rising.

What then has actually happened to women's employment in recent years? The unemployment rate for Great Britain rose from about 1½ percent in 1965 to a peak of nearly 4 percent in 1972 and has been consistently higher from the late 60s onwards than in the preceding period. During the period from 1965 to 1973 the number of women employed in all industries and services rose by about 300,000 whilst the number of male employees in employment declined by about 1½ million. There has therefore been quite a striking rise in the proportion of female to male employees during this period of higher unemployment.

However the increase in women's employment during this period has been due entirely to rising employment in services. The number of women in manufacturing actually declined by about half a million, proportionately much more than the decline in the number of men. Therefore although higher unemployment has not led to women being pushed out of the labour force overall, it has probably had different effects in different sectors of the economy.

Finally in the period since the middle 60s it is mainly the areas with the highest unemployment like the north, Wales and Scotland which have had the most steady increases in female employment. The South-East and West-Midlands, which prospered most in the post-war period of full employment have experienced a decline in women's employment since the end of the 60s. It appears to be the case, in fact, that regional policies have favoured women's employment relative to men's. For in the Development Areas designated for special incentives to industry, female employment rose by over 100,000 whilst male employment declined by over 200,000 between 1962 and 1971.

Thus what information we have by no means substantiates the simple reserve army argument about women's employment. However it may have some validity in certain industries and areas whilst other factors need to be taken into account to understand the overall picture. To know more about how the labour market actually works we really need to do more investigations into specific industries and areas.

Jean Gardiner

The information discussed here and more can be found in the Department of Employment Gazette produced monthly in the British Labour Statistics digests produced by the DE.

Glossary

Labour Force refers to all workers who are in paid employment (whether employed or self-employed) or who are unemployed: that is, out of employment but seeking work. It therefore excludes all women who are full-time housewives. In practice it also normally excludes many unemployed married women who do not register at their local Department of Employment because of lack of entitlement to unemployment benefit.

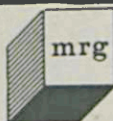
Labour Shortage exists when employers' unfilled vacancies exceed the number of unemployed workers. Labour shortages are often specific to particular occupations and locations. For example, there may be a shortage of skilled engineering workers and a surplus of coal miners, or a shortage of workers in the South-East and a surplus of workers in the North.

Unemployment Rate is the proportion of the total labour force registered as out of work and seeking work at Departments of Employment. It is an underestimate because it excludes many workers who do not register like married women (see above) and older workers. It would probably be about 2 percentage points higher if the unregistered unemployed were included.

Regional Policies, Development Areas. Despite the low level of overall unemployment (by historical standards) that has obtained in the post-war period, its different incidence between regions has been maintained. From 1963 the Tory Government provided a 10% plant and machinery grant to industry investing in certain areas of high unemployment. In 1966 the Labour Government instituted a much more extensive system of handouts to industry investing in certain areas they designated development areas including a 40% investment grant and other assistance for building, renting and training.

Services consist of distributive trades, insurance, banking and finance, national and local government, professional services like teaching and nursing, and other services like catering, laundry, cleaning.

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IN COURT: I. battered wives

Just as battered wives are beginning to get the publicity which they so desperately need, Sir George Baker, President of the Family Division of the High Court, seems to have taken a step in the opposite direction.

On June 27 Sir George issued a Practice Direction (that means a rule) that from October 1 applications for injunctions in the Family Division or the Divorce County Courts are to be heard in chambers, i.e. behind closed doors.



Mike House

This rule will be a real threat to battered wives. It must lead to the following consequences:

- 1) A wife who comes to court to get an injunction after battering will no longer get sympathetic publicity from the press. Apart from a ticking off from the judge the husband who has battered his wife will leave court without a stain on his character. Thus one of the few penalties attached to wife beating for the husband - bad publicity - disappears on October 1.
- 2) The rule allows the judge discretion - that means the judge at the hearing itself can make up his own mind whether he'll allow friends and relatives in court. Thus a wife might arrive at court supported by relatives and friends, only to find that she has to 'face it alone'.
- 3) Without publicity and comment on specific cases it will be difficult to effect changes in the law on injunctions and battering might again be pushed under the carpet as a "working class problem".
- 4) Whatever opinion might be about the usefulness of robes,

matters in chambers are heard without them. This will mean that if a husband gives an undertaking not to molest his wife, this undertaking will now be given in an apparently informal situation and will very probably not seem so serious to the husband.

The rule was made, according to Sir George, in the 'interests of the parties' and for 'the better administration of justice'. This vague comment seems to be Sir George's basis for taking away the right to a hearing in open court for the wife and it is difficult to see how it can benefit any battered wives in any way whatsoever.

by a feminist barrister

2. st johns wood women

The application by the St. Johns Wood women for alleged contempt of court by Ian McColl and Frank Thompson of the *Daily Express* in respect of the *Express* report of the first hearing of their trial on February 28th, was heard on July 30th by Lord Widgery, Lord Chief Justice, in the Court of Appeal, Strand.

In her affidavit, Faith McDevitt said: "We are not being tried by the *Daily Express* - it is the essence of a fair trial that the court should try us. The *Daily Express* has assumed the right to prejudge the case by only mentioning the prosecution case."

She referred to the "sensationalism" of the banner headline 'Animal' girls invasion and the "false and hysterical impression" it gave. "At no time has the word 'invasion' been used in the court. It sets such a tone that the body of the article could be read in a biased way. The use of the word 'girl' is degrading and belittling to the women in this trial, whose ages range from 26 to 33", she continued.

Sir Peter Rawlinson QC, for the *Daily Express*, said the application was "misconceived. . . . To say that a stipendiary magistrate could be so influenced" by a report which appeared five months previously, "in my opinion, is fanciful." He said there was no evidence the magistrate even saw the report; that no particular falsehoods or misrepresentations were mentioned in the affidavit and that the complaint seemed to centre on the tone of the report; that to describe the defendants' legal advisers as "girl-friends" was in no way "derogatory"; and that none of the reporting would deter people from coming forward as witnesses.

"With respect, they're taking this matter far too far", Rawlinson concluded. He quoted a case in the

Queens Bench in 1896, when Lord Russell, Lord Chief Justice said that "in order to justify an application for contempt, the publication must be shown to be really calculated to interfere with the trial of the accused persons."

Lord Widgery made his judgment the next day. He referred to the headline as "somewhat startling, one must say at once. It isn't always easy at first sight" to know which aspect of the matter the report was directed at. He said though that it wasn't really for the Appeals Court to comment on the suitability of the headline, since "almost everyone in public life has cause to resent" a sub-editor's choice of headline at some stage.

Widgery remarked that this affidavit concerned a criminal charge - alleged contempt of court, - a much more serious matter than a civil libel. Nevertheless, in his summing up, which was designed to show "whether there is real likelihood of any interference with the conduct of the trial", he said the magistrate was unlikely to be prejudiced "because he was there, and he has his own notes." He concluded by saying that "there is here no substance for a submission" that the course of justice was affected by the *Express* report, and refused the application.

The respondent was ordered to pay costs for the *Express*. Contributions to the St Johns Wood defence fund are therefore particularly welcome, c/o Womens Liberation Workshop, 38 Earham St, WC2. There are accounts of the trial so far in *Spare Ribs* 23 & 24.

Ann Scott

Costs could be £600-£1,000.

DAY CARE DREAMS



Questions of socialist principles in play, the use and potential misuse of voluntary labour in child care centres, . . . were discussed at a one-day workshop on day care provision for the under-

fives held in North London in July.

A presentation on the history of day care showed how day nurseries first appeared in mid-19th century England as charitable institutions ministering to the poor. There was mention of the still-prevalent ideology of provision only for those "in severe social need. Provision is still charity provision - at a cost - available for a very few who can prove inadequacy".

There was discussion too of what kind of day care we want. It's important for kids to learn interdependence between peers, one woman suggested, so that dependence is child-child rather than child-adult. What to do when older kids are being oppressive to younger ones? Contributions like these came out of a short introduction on "generating socialist processes in play". This is about working against competition and individualism; breaking down authority figures; developing non-exclusive emotional relationships; challenging sex roles; sharing work.

Women talked in the afternoon about the lessons of their projects, both community- and pressure group-oriented (like Mothers in Action). The basic contradiction in the Childrens Community Centre (Dartmouth Park Hill), for example, was felt to be between the needs of the area: for working class mothers to be able to go out to work, - and the needs of the centre: for parents to give time on the rota. And the deputy organiser of a day nursery in Islington described parents' wariness of complaining about things for fear of losing their children's place.

But women involved in the planned Colville and Westway projects in Notting Hill pointed to a breakthrough in their campaign: they have succeeded in establishing care as a right since their nurseries are going to operate on a catchment area rather than priority area basis. This means women can work through choice. Also, there won't be means-testing, but flat fees.

Finally the focus turned to what possible action might come out of the day's discussion. Opinion was divided: some women felt that demands could not be formulated until they knew more clearly what they wanted and would have liked a fuller discussion of socialist play touched on in the morning. Others were keen to start organising before momentum was lost. The conflict was resolved by a decision to hold a further conference in the autumn, but also for a campaign to be mounted around the conditions in Council Day Nurseries and to link up with the nursery nurse struggles.

Ann Scott
and Gill Pinkerton

NURSERY NURSES GET ORGANISED

"People don't know what we do. They think we sit all day and play with children." This was said at a meeting of about 90 nursery nurses, representing 13 London boroughs, on July 17th in the crypt of St. Peter's Church, Westminster - itself a day nursery for 30 kids but with only three full-time staff.

Nursery nurses are beginning to formulate demands. A group of them in Hackney have presented a set of wage proposals to the National Joint Council, which has replaced the Whitley Council as the negotiating body for nursery nurses. If the proposals were met, students would get £1026-£1209; assistants £1209-£1416; staff nurses £1926; deputy matrons £2235; matrons £2535 (all excluding London weighting).

More demands were raised at the July meeting: more money for nursery nurse tutors and for staff in handicapped units; 6 weeks holiday and 35 hour week.

There was also discussion of ways of phasing out agency staff (who earn more and break the continuity of a nursery's work), and reports on progress so far. Camden are phasing them out. One nursery closed the babyroom until they were

gone. NALGO are sending out petitions for non-cooperation with agency nurses - one nurse at the meeting stressed the importance of joining NALGO and signing the petition. Another pointed to the power of individual matrons, while a matron at the meeting said it was her borough which was uncooperative.

A social worker from Islington described a meeting of her local NALGO shop stewards committee that day which is going to ask nursery nurses to work together for

- (i) no agency staff at the end of a 60 day period starting September 1st;
- (ii) no domestic work for nursery staff;
- (iii) no co-operation with agencies in recruitment. The eventual aim is that the ratio should be scaled according to full-time staff (not including any agency staff): the official ratio is 5 kids to 1 staff for under-threes and 8 to 1 for over threes.

There was some opposition to the suggestion for a lobby of a NUPE meeting at County Hall on July 30th, at which nursery nurses would be addressed by Ron Keating, NJC member, on the grounds that militancy could arouse parents' hostility. But most of the nurses at the meeting were excited and determined. They decided to leaflet all 130 London nurseries for the demonstration. "If we're always going to be concerned about tomorrow, and not next year, we'll be in trouble", said one nurse during the debate.

'The people who choose the programs are all men'

A conference on Women and the Media held on July 6 in Bristol was stimulating in that it brought together for the first time women in the established media, women who have set up independent presses and publications, and women who have used the media with varying success within the women's movement.

Mary Stott and Renee Goddard opened the afternoon session on broadcasting and community media. Mary, and other women, stressed the need for feminists to write letters to broadcasting companies whenever they felt women were unfairly represented, or feminist issues were trivialised and distorted. Renee Goddard was gloomier, if not more to the point. "It's irrelevant whether there's a woman newsreader or not. There are no women in broadcasting who matter. The people who choose the programmes are all men. There are no women at the top."

Yet she, like the less fatalistic among us, favoured any attempts at infiltration and fairer representation - especially by approaching radio stations, which have less money and technical bally-hoo and are therefore hungrier for freelance faces and material. Several women described their efforts at making tapes for local radio stations, giving interviews, and preparing their own press releases. Most women had abandoned the generally futile practice of giving interviews to unsympathetic press and broadcasting men and women, and had got to know women on the local press instead, as some guarantee of fair representation. The Bristol paper, the *Western Daily Press*, provided topical evidence of our need for wariness, with its editorial on our conference that day. Calling it a "hen party", they waxed paranoid on the theme of our exclusion of men, pitying the "two male hen-pecked dupes" who were looking after our children while we plotted...

Fortunately, that paper has a few good women reporters, and Bristol has, in the past, provided us with many media outlets. As well as Radio Bristol, for which we have made programmes and given interviews about feminist issues, Bristol Channel - the local cable television station - has given us

much air-time. For instance, over the past three months, I have been producing a weekly 20-minute "Women's Platform" programme, over which I've had absolute editorial control and much staff help. In that time, we have broadcast programmes on pregnancy testing at the Women's Centre, abortion, the new Bristol Gay Women's group, women at work (including an interview with a stripper) and, perhaps most interesting of all, we've helped two local nurses make a programme about the conditions of their work, showing the daily ward round of two Bristol hospitals. With our help, the nurses did all their own direction, interviewing and editing, and the results are a very powerful defence of nurses' demands for better pay and working conditions.

Indeed, Bristol Channel provided the most successful sessions of the conference. For the past year, Jekka Stanley-Clarke, a 23-year-old Bristolian, has been working in Knowle West, a "difficult" council housing estate in South Bristol, initiating a community TV experiment, in which local people are encouraged to use portable video equipment to communicate with each other, and to make programmes which are broadcast on Bristol Channel. Jekka, one of the few women working as a producer in cable TV, showed a brilliant satiric programme made one Sunday afternoon "for a laugh" by the Television Workshop group of men, women and children (though mainly housewives) on the subject of the non-existent facilities (hospital, public toilets, adventure playground etc) in the area.

Later Pat Dallimore, a mother of eight children, was loudly applauded when she spoke to the conference about her work with television, and why she felt it important for Knowle Westers to be able to talk about their area, both among themselves and their councillors, and also to the rest of Bristol (to whom Knowle West is something of a dirty word). Claiming a fear of Women's Liberation, Pat told us how "hard and intense" we come across on television and in the papers, and she warned us that she and her friends will be making a satirical programme about Women's Liberation in the autumn. (Later Pat said how friendly she'd found everyone at the conference, and has invited Bristol women's group to come to talk to the women who are making the programme).

Another conference will be held next year. For details, or for a transcript of this conference and other articles/notes (at 20p), contact Helen Taylor, 54 St Paul's Road, Bristol 8.

Helen Taylor



The lobby on July 30th: 90 nurses wearing bright yellow Nursery Staff Action Group badges shouted "Exploitation Out, Equality In". One came barefoot with a patched skirt and a broom, and a placard saying "Nursery Nurse - Cinderella of Pay." At first the women were told they wouldn't be allowed in to the NUPE meeting which would be discussing their pay. But they refused to move. They sat on the steps of County Hall, sang songs, and laughed when their chanting echoed from the walls of nearby St Thomas's Hospital. Within fifteen minutes they had been allowed in.

A meeting the next evening discussed whether you needed to be in the union. Union members said that it was difficult to take action in working time unless you had the support of the union, but felt that the action group was important too because it gave nurses from both NALGO and NUPE, as well as non-union nurses, a chance to work together. "There's no point saying the union doesn't do anything, because you personally are the union", said one nurse to another who was doubtful.

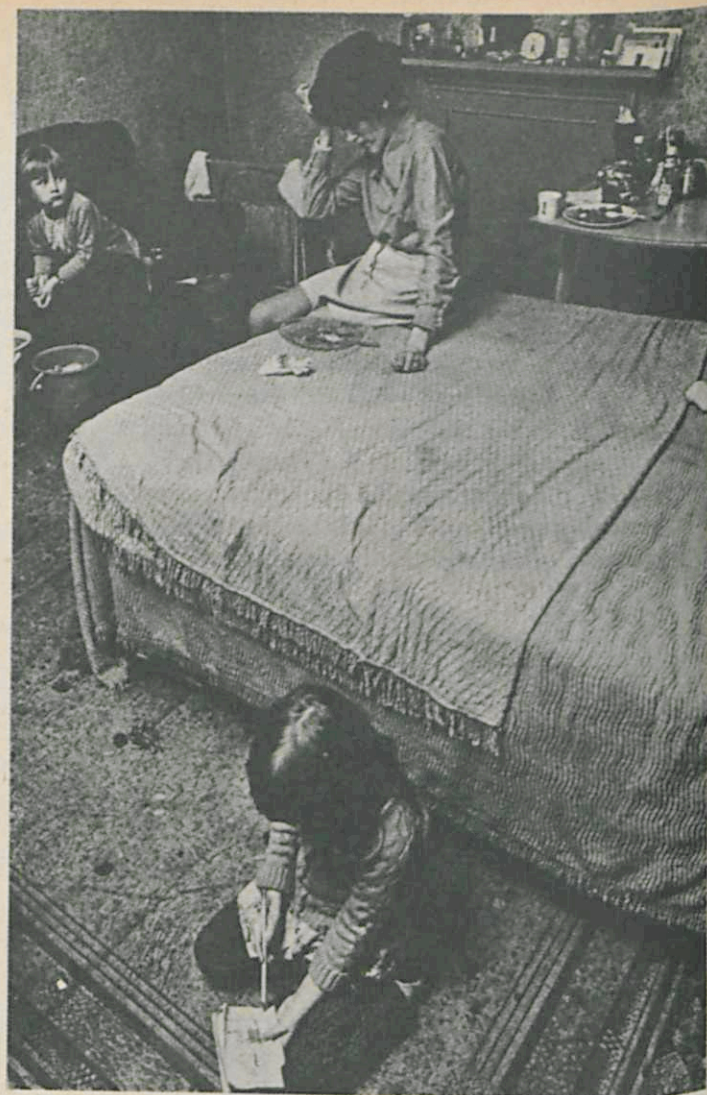
It was decided that nurses should organise inter-nursery staff meetings in all the boroughs within the next month, and lobby the NJC working party on nursery nurses' pay on August 2nd.

The low wages and lack of training or further education for women both contribute to the poverty in which 620,000 one parent families are living. This is just one of the findings of the

Finer Report

published in July, documenting the massive disadvantages which lone parents face in bringing up their children.

Although the majority of the families, in which over a million children are growing up, are fatherless families, over 100,000 one parent families are headed by a father on his own. It is the fact of single-handedness, shared by both men and women, which makes one parent families among the poorest in Britain today. Almost half the families are totally dependent on Supplementary Benefit, many having to live at this subsistence level years and years. As well as basic cash problems, many parents struggle with homelessness, day-care problems, and most embittering of all, a bewildering legal system apparently designed to provoke as much upset and irrationality as possible. The issues are complex and delicate, and at their root lies a crucial social assumption; that the family is the basic unit of society, and that the family must be one in which women are dependents.



The Finer Committee, not surprisingly, made no attempt to challenge this assumption during the five years in which it was brooding over the problem. Nevertheless, its wide-ranging recommendations have already made many enemies in Whitehall, where any reform causes upheaval. The main proposals are:

(1) A new social security benefit called a Guaranteed Maintenance Allowance, which together with the tax credit scheme would give a lone parent an income of £12.65, plus £2.70 for each child. The adult allowance would be tapered by 50% for every bit of extra income (apart from an initial £4.00 until earnings reach the level of the average industrial male wage). The aim of this scheme is to give the lone parent a genuine choice about whether or not to take a part-time job.

(2) A new system of family courts to replace the present hierarchy of courts. This would involve the complete abolition of the present jurisdiction of the magistrates courts in matrimonial matters, of which the report is very critical. The new courts would be staffed by judges and specially trained lay magistrates, and would be completely removed from the criminal associations of the present magis-

trates' courts.

(3) The burden of collecting maintenance would no longer be with the parent caring for the children, but would be taken over by a new authority who would assess the ability of the absent parent to pay, and there would be no need for any contact between the parents over the issue of maintenance. At present the maintenance system is totally inadequate; orders are set at a very low level and even then the majority of maintenance orders are in arrears. This is not so much through unwillingness to pay as it is due to the inability of most men to support two families. Thus the state is already paying out £150 million a year to one parent families through the humiliating Supplementary Benefit system, a system which the committee regarded as completely inappropriate. (See Spare Rib No. 23.)

(4) The chairman of the Committee has personally laid great emphasis on the recommendations about housing, where lone parents are very vulnerable. Amongst many other proposals which would not need legislation, the report calls for the amendment of the Matrimonial Homes Act 1967, so that where the husband has sole

rights of tenancy or ownership, a court can order him out of the home altogether, if it is in the interests of the wife and children to remain in that home.

(5) The Committee has some fairly pious hopes about persuading employers to be more sympathetic towards lone parents and the flexible hours which they need, but on the counter-part of employment - day-care for children - the committee was divided. Some of the members clearly had strong feelings about working mothers, and the report calls for a general expansion in day-care services to the under-fives, and a plea to local authority social service departments to think about care for children of school age with working parents.

On the whole one must acknowledge that if a single one of these proposals were implemented tomorrow, it would be an improvement in the lives of many families. For this reason Gingerbread - the self-help association for one parent families - has welcomed the report, even though its own evidence to the committee was strongly opposed to the means tests. To be luke-warm would be to offer the government a ready-made excuse for further delay. Not that excuses

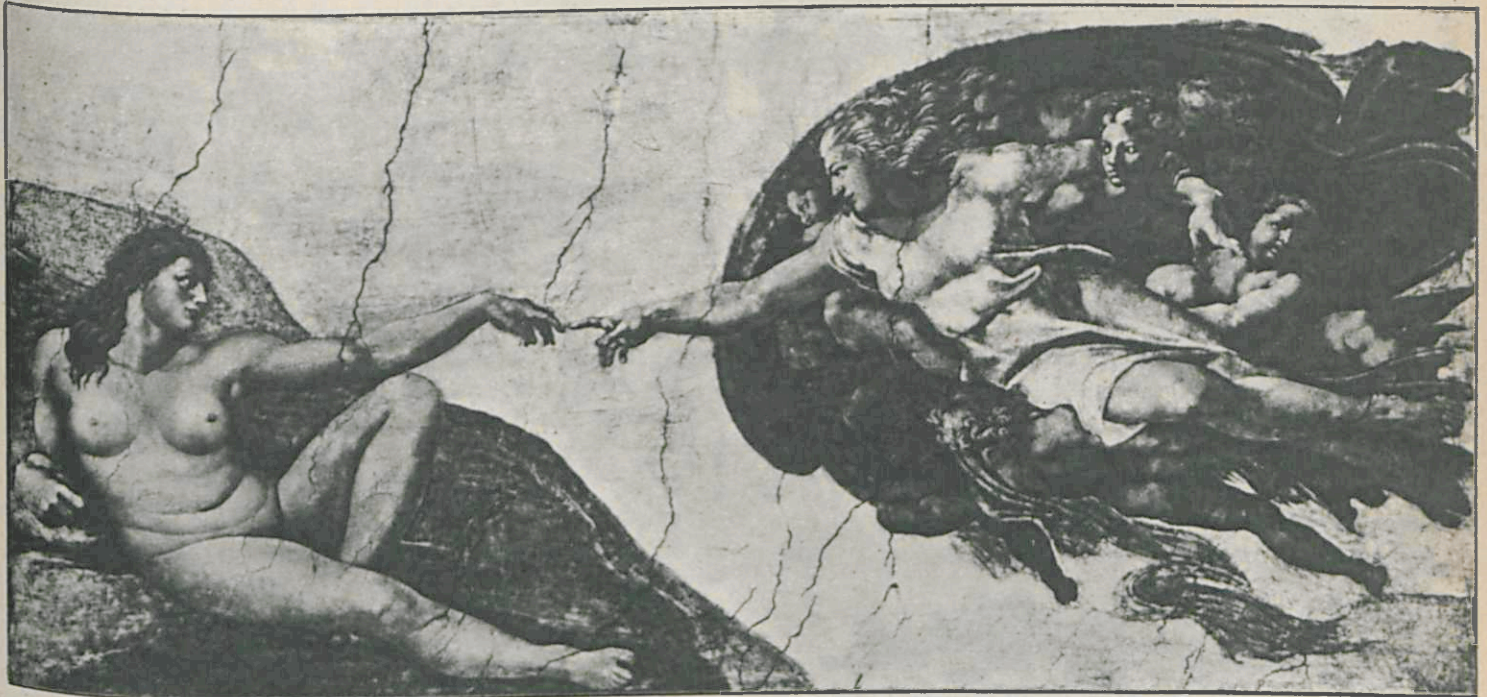
have been slow in coming. The government's response, made by Barbara Castle, was non-committal in general. On the issue of the allowance, she evaded the report's message altogether. She "could not accept commitment to the particular recommendation made by the committee", and all would be solved in the millennium by the Child Endowment scheme, Labour's answer to the equally cumbersome Tory tax credit scheme. Which entirely misses the point that the Finer Report called for a special benefit, designed for one parent families and their special needs.

Even if the allowance was brought into the social security system, we would still be stuck with the sordid cohabitation rule. The committee proposed various sweeteners for this pill, but because the 'welfare system' is not based on the individual but is family oriented, i.e. means women dependent on men, the committee could find no way of challenging the rule, although they claim that it was the most taxing issue that they discussed.

In 25 years time, there are likely to be half as many one parent families again. Another generation of children - how long can children wait?

Janet Hadley

god the FATHER, god the SON, and god the..



One hundred and fifty-four churchwomen from 49 countries met in June in West Berlin for a week-long conference sponsored by the World Council of Churches on 'Sexism in the Seventies.' The conference was called by a concerned group of women within the WCC following an announcement that the main assembly of the World Council, which meets every seven years, would be held next year in Jakarta and would have as its main theme 'Liberation.' There was nothing wrong with that, except . . . the topic of 'Women' was nowhere to be found. So the women decided to have their own conference.

Great effort was made to ensure that the conference would be representative of women everywhere — there were social workers, teachers, barristers, housewives, theologians, members of parliament, and lay church workers from rich and poor countries. At first this diversity threatened to divide the conference. But, as Judge Annie Jiagge of Ghana summarised, "We grew together and discovered that the pain of sexism is the pain of injustice. Discrimination and oppression are two sides of the same coin. Once participants had identified the problem, women from the developed world and those from the developing world talked about the

same thing from different angles."

"We long to catch a new vision of what it means to be fully human in Christ," summed up one group of women discussing theology. That will mean de-masculating the image of god — "God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. . ." There has been no room for women in the Trinity, despite predominantly female congregations. "Let your women keep silence in the churches," said St. Paul, "for it is not permitted unto them to speak."

"We are saying 'No,'" says Nelle Morton, a theologian participating in the conference. "We are saying 'No' to a system that legitimises these images and symbols through cosmic myths and daily ceremonial rituals that shore up the system. . . We are saying 'No' to all that is alien to ourselves and our ministry. We no longer can tolerate confessing sins we feel we have not committed — sins defined by male experience. . . We can now begin to confess those sins we feel we have committed. The suppression of our own anger, not recognising it as a way of fighting through to a place where love can express itself; the lack of confidence and boldness, the lack of pride, the unquestioned obedience, and the falseness of our humility."

On the opening night of the conference, a group of women who work in the British media presented an hour-long multi-media programme depicting the heritage of sexism from Adam and Eve to the present day.

The conference itself produced three sets of recommendations. The first set is directed to the

World Council of Churches. It calls for a study of "God-language," with revisions which will communicate Christian theology more personally to all races, cultures, and sexes; the establishment of funds for the theological education and participation of women from all six continents; the elimination of sexist language, concepts and imagery from all speeches and documents circulated at WCC meetings; correction of "sexist errors" in Biblical translations; and the setting up of a permanent WCC Commission on the Status of Women.

The second set of recommendations is directed to the 267 church bodies affiliated with the WCC. The women stressed the need for educational programmes for women to make them aware of their potential as leaders in church and community, to make men and women aware of changing sexual roles and a woman's right to lead a creative life apart from that of wife and mother. A strong plea was made for the churches to re-examine attitudes towards single women, unmarried mothers, divorcees and widows, and to set up counselling programmes staffed and directed by women and men to advise people having problems adjusting to the changing relationship between the sexes. The churches are called upon to change their structures radically and open all service leadership — including ordination — to women.

The third set of recommendations is directed to women and women's organisations — to combat the economic exploitation of

women, to condemn sexually-stereotyped advertising, and to eliminate discriminatory content and language from teaching materials.

In conjunction with International Women's Year, a special project was recommended to be directed towards alleviating the misery of women suffering from the effects of dire poverty, on a world-wide basis.

By the end of the conference, 154 women from 154 backgrounds were united by the conclusion that discrimination and oppression — be it political, religious, economic or social — have been tools of a male-dominated hierarchy, trapping men as well as women; but things can get better if people can work together towards human liberation.

Already their efforts are beginning to take effect. At a subsequent WCC officers meeting the subject of the Jakarta conference arose. Why was an entire plenary session being devoted to the subject of women, asked a male officer? "Because the women said so," answered another male officer.

Kathy Hersch

The picture on this page is an ad for Florence Eiseman clothes, "created by woman for woman." The Women's Liberation Workshop are ordering some more. Meanwhile you can write to Jim Weller and Partners 700 N. Milwaukee Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin & say how terrific you think the ad is.

Anne Doggett, who has been involved in the women's movement in Australia and England, recently came back from two months in Delhi, Bombay and the Himalayas.

INDIA

What's the position of women at work now?

There's a huge gap between women's legal position and the practice of the employment of women. Legally they have equal pay and they're not supposed to be discriminated against in any field, but only 10% of women are in the urban work force, and they're lower paid than men. Women are in match-making, textiles, pharmaceuticals; they're employed in construction works, carrying really heavy loads. They're also looking after their children, who are

sitting on the sites. Very few creches are provided: as women are so marginal in the work force, they really don't have to take into account women's needs. In fact, women's employment has declined from 11% in the fifties to 10% now, partly because the indigenous industry is geared to luxury production rather than steady growth.

84% of women are still tied in rural areas, where their work is quite total. In some states they do all the outdoor work and the domestic work. In some places

men don't do any work at all, they sit round smoking dope - but women don't smoke dope. Dope's quite widely smoked among the lower classes and castes, particularly in rural areas.

How does women's work relate to the caste system?

If the caste system still remains intact in your village, then men take over whatever function their fathers had - leather-making, pottery-making, for example. Within the caste women's role is to be domestic beings, to bring up children and to work for the benefit of men - to provide leisure and happiness. That's written into all folk tradition.

Caste has broken down to some extent in the urban areas because of capitalism's inroads. This means you're on the labour market and can be employed in any position at all. For example, among the untouchable castes women are now employed as sweeps. Sweeping has been relegated to women because it's a sub-human form of employment.

India is divided between Hindu and Muslim. What role has religion played in determining women's social position?

Petit-bourgeois Muslim women - not so much upper caste, or lower

caste, i.e. women workers - are still in purdah, indistinguishable figures shrouded in black, with black veils down to their knees. This means that Muslim women can't get any education because they can't go to school because they can't be seen. It means they're totally tied to the home, and it also means that illiteracy amongst Muslim women is the highest.

Hindu women are kept very much in a traditional role. For example, most Hindu men, particularly those who've had secondary education, wear western dress. This is in contradiction to the terrible heat, but they still wear it because it's status. All Hindu women wear saris, though - even university-educated women.

Aside from university education for the moment, what is primary and secondary school like for girls?

It's not compulsory to go to school. 62% of girls go to primary school compared to 92% of boys. One-third of all girls discontinue schooling after four years, because in a sense there's no reason for women to go to school. The total rate of literacy for women is 18% compared to 40% for men.

Before they have children, they're either helping in the home, or in employment. A few factories employ primarily 15-16 year old girls, who are paid very low wages. They're not unionised, because they only see themselves there for a few years.

I presume these women get married very early and start having children. Children are still an important economic use: in the sense of going out to work, and as security in old age.

What higher education opportunities are there for women?

The ratio of women to men in university is 1 to 4. Only 20% of graduates are in employment, and the rest are there for marriage. In all the papers - i.e. the middle-class English language papers - there's column upon column of men asking for brides: one of the necessary qualifications is a degree.

Women at university are mainly doing humanities. Of educated women, 75% are teachers (71% in primary schools); 15% are clerks or typists; 7% are nurses.

You get the split between the



career woman; the Indira Gandhi image - the total woman in politics; and the total woman in the home. Women make decisions about careers or families. Women who choose a career are quite isolated from the general population except for a very small elite.

You had an abortion while you were in India. What did you see of the medical system, and of the availability of contraception?

I hadn't had my periods for two months. I went along to the hospital and said "what is it?". There was really no reply. I went again and they said "Have a D & C, and because you're having a D & C have an IUD as well, because it's compulsory". It's as vague as that.

It's compulsory to have either an IUD or sterilisation. The women that I came into contact with felt very put out that this was forced on them, but you have no control in every day life in India if you're an ordinary person. So they don't expect any control in the hospital system.

The hospitals are fairly primitive, at least the one I was in - no cooking facilities, heavy reliance on relatives to bring in food. The toilet system is a very difficult one for them, I think. Very few women in the public hospitals know how to use toilets, because they don't have them in their shacks or dwellings. So they shit and piss on the floor. You wipe your arse with water with your left hand, which is also the one you make love with. Your right hand is for eating. That's what men are told. There are fairly rigid traditions about how one goes about one's life, and that's one of them.

Everywhere you go, no matter how small the village, there's family planning. But I think it's made very little impact in terms of the overall size of families. This is partly because the economic needs of the people make it artificial to set up family planning clinics within villages. Family planning's free in the public hospitals; but if you want to pay as a private patient, which means upper middle classes, then hospitalisation with a private abortion costs £20 a day.

Could you talk about Indian sexuality: relations between men and women, homosexuality...?

One thing that was very obvious in Delhi was a phenomenon called Eve-teasing: men of all classes and castes rubbing up against women of all classes and castes. They reach out their hands and grab your breasts, whether you're with a man or not; particularly on buses, which are very crowded. Women face this every single day of their lives, from their teenage.

In the big cities like Delhi and in the villages - though not so much in Bombay - men walk around draped over each other, holding hands, round each other's neck. I didn't know how to interpret this - as a straight homosexual thing, or as the isolation of women from men: for you hardly come into contact with any women. Women just don't wander in the streets, but you get a lot of men just hanging out - there's no work.

I was told later that in the public schools (which would be like public schools in England) the general experience for a man is homosexuality, and for a woman there's nothing. There's a theme of it being OK to have homosexual experience, but of course you can't be a homosexual because you have to get married and have children which is very necessary to the Indian culture and to capitalism.

Indian sexuality has been influenced by capitalist film industries, but there's a romantic sexual content as well, and a lewd one on top of that. God knows how women interpret it, because women are the object. But men must be in a schizophrenic position: they're supposed to respect women and worship them because they're Mother Earth. But women are also lewd sex objects: this is part of what British imperialism has done to the Indian culture, it's not really part of the culture itself.

There's a native film industry turning this stuff out in amazing quantities: all romantic nonsense with a bit of titillation. You get huge queues going to see it, particularly men; women don't come out of the homes all that much.

What about prostitution and pornography?

Prostitution is a big industry. Because of the lack of work and the instability of any work situation, you either get women earning their living as prostitutes, or women working in factories and prostituting themselves with the management to make sure that their jobs continue.

I presume prostitution now must play a role similar to beggary. A lot of Indians just don't see beggars. In Bombay I saw beggar women naked... and yet they're so repressive regarding women and women's sexuality. You'd think this would be a contradiction, and yet it's incorporated into the entire culture: beggar women are apart from normal women, they really aren't even human, so it's OK that they'll go round the streets naked because they've got no clothes.

Pornography isn't like in England. You don't see nipples, you see breasts in clinging see-through saris, and men leering sensually down some woman's breast, or looking romantically

into some woman's eyes, about to kiss passionately. It's everywhere you look, on film adverts and calendars; but it's nothing substantial.

It's an unsophisticated sexuality. There's no sex education in schools, either. This too makes family planning very artificial. A woman doesn't find out anything about her body or her sexuality - it's a taboo subject - so when family planning units are set up, or D & C's done, they're out of women's control and they don't have any understanding of what's happening to them at all.

What kinds of women did you come into contact with to talk to?

Women in political organisations, which were just taking into account the position of women. These women were very interested in what was going on in England, and very aware of the lack of any analysis of Indian women.

Analysis is difficult anyway because of the rural-urban-tribal-caste-religious differences within India. One of the things we did talk about was women's movements since the British were in India, and what role the Communist Party and the Nationalist Congress Party played in terms of awakening women and bringing them into the general struggle, which was very little. Women were primarily used for numbers of demonstrations; after particular campaigns were over they drifted back into their homes. For example, women were used in a campaign to force the British government to make food available during the Bengal famine of 1942 because they were mothers and wives, and therefore cared more about food than anyone else.

The only people who have ever fought on women's issues were the 19th century reformers, or Hindu revivalists - who went back to a "golden era" thousands of years ago when women and men were supposedly equal. They fought against the practice of *sati* - wives were burned on the funeral pyre of

their husbands... because women could not live without men. There are cases of thousands of women being forced onto the fires by being tied down.

They fought also against child marriages - where four year old children were betrothed to men in middle age. You get atrocities where women die - men had total control over these women - and the British parliament passes laws saying that girl children can't be married until they're 12.

Has there ever been a secular bourgeois feminist movement?

Only that grew out of the Nationalist Congress, which did things for women in the professions - like pushing for women to study medicine.

The Nationalist Congress blossomed under Gandhi and Nehru, and women were brought in on a mass scale then. In fact Congress was opened up to all classes and castes during the Gandhi era. Women took a huge political step when they fought the salt tax by going down to the rivers and making their own salt and selling it: they were kept behind doors before that. But there was still no feminist consciousness of oppression.

How involved politically are women now? In the recent all-India rail strike for example?

Women took a militant position when Congress issued arrests for 6-8000 workers and unionists a week before the rail strike was due to begin. Families in government houses were being thrown out on the streets, and women sat on the railways lines and stopped trains going along.

As a feminist, how did you experience India?

I had no personality when I was there, unless I really fought to be recognised as a human being. It was too much of a struggle, so I let these men just talk to the man I happened to be with. If you're a woman they ignore you.

Woman, Culture, and Society

Edited by Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere

Seventeen women anthropologists explore the questions: Are there societies which, unlike our own, make women equals or superiors of men? If not, are women 'naturally' men's inferiors? Why do women, on our own society and elsewhere, accept a subordinate standing? How, and in what kinds of situations do women exercise power? How do women help to shape, create, and change the private and public worlds in which they live? £7.25 paper covers £2.30 Stanford

Oxford

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Zoe Fairbairns sifts the media...

Cartoon Jeanette Sutton



The *Sunday Telegraph* had a scoop on June 30. You could tell it was a scoop because it was on the front page, had a two-column headline and credited two reporters. The astounding story pieced together by ace reporters Gerald Bartlett and David Woodhead concerned "The 'Effrontery of Mr Benn.'" Tony Benn had turned up at a dinner of the Society of British Aerospace Companies with his policy adviser, Frances Morrell. That was the story. The 'effrontery' bit referred to Ms Morrell's sex. The dinner is usually all-male.

Contributions to the 'woman's identity' controversy this month have included William Buckley who, writing in the *International Herald Tribune* on July 16, opined: "That there are grown people who go round saying things like 'chairperson' is testimony not to bisexual attempts to create equality but transsexual resolutions to sound stupid"; and Philippa Toomey in the *Times* (July 15) who, again referring to the term "chairperson" wondered "why is it that attempts to avoid the use of the word 'man' in a natural context turn out to be ludicrous." It's hard to see what is so 'natural' about referring to a woman as a man, but hopefully Ms Toomey's question was not purely rhetorical.

Why are midwives paid less than bunny girls, asked the Royal College of Midwives recently. Patrick Hutber sought to answer the question 'by way of light relief' in his 'Economic Opinion' column in the *Sunday Telegraph* on July 14. Ready? "It is open to any dissatisfied midwife to go and become a bunny girl." The resultant glut of bunnies and

dearth of midwives would then force midwives' rates up and bunnies' down. However, Hutber continues jovially, many midwives "may not have the right figures to be bunny girls... after all, bunny girls are being rewarded for possessing assets which are in shorter supply and have a shorter life than the skills of midwifery. What's wrong with that?" Answers to Patrick Hutber, *Sunday Telegraph*, Fleet Street, London.

Mr Justice Neild, however, does not seem to share Hutber's view that a woman should be paid for being good looking. The reverse, in fact. On June 25, awarding Sally Collier £8,285 damages for an accident which scarred and half-crippled her, he declared that "She is of outstanding good looks which will enable her to overcome these difficulties." And another woman to lose money by playing woman's role was the wife in a divorce settlement case reported in the *Times Law Report* on June 18. She had applied for the customary one-third share in the matrimonial home in recognition of 15 years unpaid domestic service, but as she had now remarried to a wealthy man, the judge decided she didn't need one-third and gave her one-twelfth.

The *Western Mail* on June 26 marvelled that an all-female jury had "destroyed the old adage that women can't make up their minds" by taking only a few minutes to reach a unanimous verdict; the *Guardian* headlined a story about Clare Francis who had just crossed the Atlantic single-handed "Tiller Girls" on July 4; and Michael

Bateman (*Sunday Times*) described Jenny Turrall, the 14-year-old swimming champion as a "swimming nymphet."

There was an unusual amount of press coverage of the Edinburgh Conference; Elisabeth Dunn reported it for the *Sunday Telegraph* and again demonstrated the media's blank incomprehension of the fact that the women's movement has neither leaders nor celebrities, going even to the lengths of solemnly listing the people who were not there - "Greer, Tweedie, Stott." And a letter to the *Morning Star* on July 17, following their report of the Conference, declared that the amount of time spent at Edinburgh on the subject of lesbianism proved that the women's movement is "bourgeois"... there being no such thing, one presumes, as a working class lesbian.

In brief... Frank Sinatra's blacking by Australian trade unionists following his remarks that Australian women journalists were "whores worth a dollar fifty", was headlined "Frank Sinatra is grounded by angry union men" by the *Times*... in view of the notorious oppression of tea-pickers in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, surely Encounter Overland could have chosen a more appropriate way of advertising their tours to the East than a cartoon of a woman plucking teabags out of a tea-plant with the caption "See the East while it's still a bit different."



...and Time Magazine of July 22 reported Senator Sam Ervin, in the throes of despair at the corruption he was having to uncover, quoting from Kipling: "God, give us men." Funny, I thought that men was just what they had. ■

SELL OUT

Dear Spare Rib,
I enclose an advertisement which appeared in the *Financial Times* of 23 July - self-explanatory and highly inflammatory. They obviously have a low opinion of women's contribution to society - and consider them a second-class work force.
Sylvia Davidson, Edinburgh.

ANTICIPATE
Equal Pay Day with VAUGHAN Automatic Assembly Machines
VAUGHAN ASSOCIATES LIMITED LONDON NOTTINGHAM SHREWSBURY
SPECIALISTS IN ASSEMBLY, INSPECTION PRODUCTION AUTOMATION

Randy Racquel
No more lonely nights when you have Racquel! A beautiful blonde with long, flowing hair, she's the perfect companion for your every need. No more problems with hard to get girls, Racquel never gets tired. She's always 5' tall with an artificial vagina that feels like the real thing. Soft life-like touch, much stronger and more realistic than other dolls on the market. Comes complete with lubricating cream for extra pleasure. Our price just £12.95. Well, well up small enough to fit into the glove compartment of your car.

From Knave magazine. Sent in by Annie Franklin, Coln St. Aldwyns, Glos.



"Bobbies on your Bra: Aren't our British Policemen Wonderful? New from Woolworth are one-size stretch nylon bra and pantie sets cheekily printed with British bobbies guarding all the strategic places." From a Woolworth press release which turned up at Spare Rib.

not only..

but also

We were expecting the worst – the programmes had been finalised at the last minute, publicity had been restricted, the first batch of posters had disintegrated on the press... but the best happened. Hundreds of you came and made the weekend a benefit for Spare Rib in every way.

The events began around 7pm on Saturday, July 13, at Garage and the Art Meeting Place, adjacent galleries in Earlham Street, Covent Garden. People began streaming in before the benches had been set up or the lighting tested. More and more people came and Garage was crowded even when people filtered through to the bar which was provided in the Arts Meeting Place by the Two Brewers pub. No-one complained about the crush. Eventually we were forced to put up a full house notice.

The Limited Dance Company started the evening with Sally Potter's surrealist contemporary dance piece called 'Who is Sylvia? Three Clues'. In it the dancers cut across and contradict the romantic images associated with women embodied in the words of the song. The dance ends with Sally, dressed in men's pyjamas, searching through a circle of cheese sandwiches. Like everyone else the company performed for Spare Rib for free. They collected an almost completely new cast for the evening as most of the original group were on holiday. We want to thank them, and Sally for persuading the Place to lend us a piano.

Paradise Foundry followed with Michelene Wandor's plays 'Mal de Mere' and 'Christmas' (see S.R. No.22). Paradise Foundry were fast, clear and co-ordinated. Michelene says that their interpretation of the plays is even closer to her ideas after their three month tour with them. We want to thank Del, the production manager, who worked all week and weekend, finding free equipment, setting up and working the lighting both at Garage and at the Half Moon Theatre on Sunday where the company performed again.

There was a long interval at Garage while the stage was rearranged for the Moodies. Bobby Baker performed with her 270

homemade 'meringue ladies' in Art Meeting Place – more thanks; thanks to Art Meeting Place who didn't mind smashed meringues being trodden round the gallery and thanks to Bobby who sold the survivors in aid of the magazine.

Back in Garage the Moodies began (see S.R. No.19). They had split up for the summer and came together from Ireland, Germany and elsewhere specially. Thanks very much to them for creating a crazy, amazing climax to the evening.

Thanks also to Ivan, Adam and Frank for selling raffle tickets and doing the draw; to Roselee Goldberg; to Su Braden; to Garage and Tony Stokes.

On Sunday we showed films at the Electric cinema (with thanks to Nancy Platt of Twenty-Four Frames, Francine Winham, Claire Johnston and Dave Harker for their help). The programme included Joan Churchill's *Sylvia Fran and Joy*, Gunvar Nelson's and Freude Bartlett's *One and the Same*, Anne Severson's *Riverbody* and Nelly Kaplan's *Dirty Mary*. Technically and politically the films were all very different.

Joan Churchill's film is a documentary on the ways three women reacted to marriage. Anne Severson's *Riverbody* is a short experimental film with male and female bodies blurring into each other in quick succession. Nelly Kaplan's full length feature film shows one woman's revenge on a small French town; the used becomes the user and the hypocrisy of the townspeople is finally blown wide open. The Electric Cinema was packed and it was the same story that evening at the Half Moon Theatre in the East End. We really underestimated both the popularity of Michelene's plays and the generous support people were prepared to show for the magazine. We apologise to all the people we had to turn away. (Thanks Half Moon for lending us the theatre). Paradise Foundry performed all five plays in 'Friends and Strangers Alike' – *Pearls, Swallows, Christmas, Mal de Mere* and *Joey*.

We finally want to thank the hundreds of people who came and made it such a good weekend.

Many people were involved in setting up Spare Rib's benefit at the Marquee on June 30th. The warm feeling from people and performers, and support like the bar-workers donating their tips – one, her night's wages – made the evening an experience in solidarity and encouragement for the continuing existence of the magazine.



Joan Armatrading



Jo Ann Kelly



Doris Henderson



Goldie Zelcowitz

Special thanks to: Barbara Pendleton who made it possible for us to use the Marquee. Doris Henderson and her now sadly disbanded group, The Eclection. Joan Armatrading and Jaki Whitren, who spent several days beforehand working out some numbers to play together. Jo Ann Kelly who specially travelled from the North, and managed to get musicians together at very short notice. Goldie Zelcowitz, who made a surprise appearance and sang with Jo Ann Kelly. The Marquee management and staff and Uli Prutz. Sarah Ward, who helped publicise the concert, did the disco between performers and compered the evening. John Peel, Charlie Gillett, Jenny Lacey and all the people who helped with publicity. All the bands that offered to play but unfortunately it wasn't possible to have everyone.

Marion Fudger



Jaki Whitren

The next Spare Rib benefit is a disco at the Metropolitan pub 95 Farringdon Road, London E.C.1; 7.30pm Saturday Sept 14th: 60p.

This month's Spare Parts is about cheap food

Along with rent, food is one of the most constant and ever increasing expenses of living. The price of food has escalated alarmingly in the last year. Yet much of the increase in price has nothing to do with the food itself. Import costs, packaging costs, labour costs all get passed on to the consumer. Fresh food is in many ways a cheap 'luxury' since so many women and men, working inside and outside the home, cannot afford the time to use anything other than convenience foods. If you do have a little more time, there are other ways of buying and eating more cheaply, and a food co-op is just one.

I share a house with four other people and we belong to a food co-op in Highbury, London, with ten other households, amounting to roughly 30 people of all ages and sexes. Each Saturday, one household goes down to Spitalfield Market, and buys about £20 of fruit and vegetables which we then divide between us according to amounts ordered by each household over the phone on the preceding Thursday or Friday. An average bill for our household is between £1.50 and £2.50 and that effectively keeps us in fresh food for the week. Since many of the households are vegetarian, all basic foods can be bought once a week for a remarkably low price. Practical advantages are the cheapness, the once-a-week shop, and constant supply of healthy food. One of the joys for me has been learning to go to the market and buy in large quantities, learning to compare prices and get a good bargain, learning how the food market works, and helping myself and others to work co-operatively to provide us all with a basic necessity. Here are a few hints about how to run a food co-op.

History of our Co-op Highbury Foods

Highbury Foods Co-op started before our household joined out of

discussions amongst some of the women's groups in North London in late '72. It is now a mixed Co-op for two good reasons. Since many women live in households with men, it would be impossible to have segregated 'feminist' food. More practically, since the men would eat the food, the women decided that the men must equally participate in buying it. Otherwise the women would be shopping for the men, which is not the intention behind co-operative self help.

There are two ways of looking at a co-op. One is to seek to provide basic food very cheaply. The other is to be able to buy, at a reduced price, the more unusual and expensive food which we could not afford normally. There is a compromise over these points of view and we work such differences out at our Co-op meetings which happen once every few months or so. It has now been running for about 18 months with a combination of longstanding member households and relatively new ones. It's a great experience which we would like to share.

How we run our Food Co-op
There are three stages: the order,
the buying, the distribution.

Ordering

We have a Co-op book which each household takes it in turn to take for the week. A page looks like this

(b) roughly three fruit and three vegetables.

(c) seasonal specialties or one-offs like garlic and lemons which can be ordered in a big quantity and keep for a while.

(d) 'an optional extra means a special unknown item that might be the expensive exotica or some cheap food that's in the market that week. Adds some suspense.

This list goes down the side of the page. Then you phone all the households in turn offering the list and taking down in columns under their names the quantities of each item they want. Buying in large quantities from the market dictates the amount you *have* to buy of any item. For example, you learn quite quickly that bananas come in boxes of 28 lb, oranges in boxes of 75 or 120, green peppers in boxes of 12lb. (This varies a bit). So after having taken all the orders, you then add up the quantities for each item that has been ordered.

Take grapefruit, for instance: if 40 were ordered and the market sells them in boxes of 48, you have to adjust each individual order to make 48.

The book contains the information we have gradually accumulated about quantities and prices so we can see what quantities we will have to buy in, and what price

out and (b) have time to shop around a bit and compare prices on different stalls before they start closing up. You have to take cash (£25) with you. The marketeers are friendly but busy, so it is better to have an idea of quantity and the price you expect so that you don't have to do complicated maths in your head to work out what p per lb 90p for 12lb is.

You purchase from the stallholder and he gives you a bill in triplicate which you take to the stall's cash desk, usually at the back. Onto the price quoted will be added a few pence for portorage. You can then either pick up the box or crate or sack and take it then and there back to your car or van; or you can leave it at the stall, set on one side with your name on it and come back for a collection at the end of all your buying (make sure you keep the receipt in this case); or you can make a central dump in the market of all your purchases; or you can get the goods delivered to your car in the carpark. You can drive a car through the market and do a pick up round. This is what we usually do.

Each time you buy an item, you enter the actual quantity you bought in the quantity column and the price paid. On getting home for a huge and well-deserved breakfast at about 8.00 a.m., you then have to settle down to working out











| | Hand red | crick 2 angie | julia berry inn | franchise 2 govt away | 6th 2 Mike | Take | Mag | Roger 2 Jimmy | Steve 2 Chris | TOTAL | Market Quantity | estimated Price | actual price | unit price |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
|  Grapefruit | 4 ⁽⁵⁾ | 5 ⁽⁶⁾ | 6 ⁽⁷⁾ | | 8 ⁽¹⁰⁾ | 10 ⁽¹²⁾ | 1 | 4 ⁽⁵⁾ | 2 | 40 | 48 56 | 1.80 | 1.70 | 3 1/2 |
|  Bananas | 1 lb | 3 lb ^{2 1/2} | 5 lb ⁴ | | 6 lb | 2 lb | 10 lb ⁸ | 3 lb ^{2 1/2} | 2 lb | 33 lb | 28 lb | 1.70 | 1.90 | 6 p |
|  Oranges | 7 ⁸ | 7 ⁸ | 15 ¹⁸ | | 15 ²⁶ | 20 ²⁵ | 15 ²⁰ | 12 ¹⁴ | 5 | 96 | 120 75 40 | 1.20 | 1.00 | 5 1/2 p |
|  Mushrooms | 1/2 lb | 1/2 lb ^{3/4} | 1/2 lb | | 1/4 lb ^{1/2} | 1/2 lb ^{3/4} | 1 lb | 1 lb | - | 4 1/4 | 2 1/2 1/3 x 2 | 37 1/2 p | 75 p | 15 p lb |
|  Lettuce | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 2 ¹ | 1 | 2 | 3 ² | 2 ¹ | 15 | 12 | 60 | 50 | 4 1/2 p |
|  Green Pepper | 2 lb | 1 lb ^{1 1/2} | 2 | | 2 | 1 1/2 | 1 lb | 2 | - | 11 1/2 | 12 | 1.80 | 1.80 | 15 p |
|  Broccoli | 2 lb ³ | 1 lb ^{1 1/2} | 2 ³ | | 2 lb ⁴ | 3 lb | 3 lb ^{1 1/2} | 2 lb ³ | - | 15 lb | 24? | ? | 80 | 3 1/3 p |
|  Cooking Apples | 3 lb | 4 lb | 3 lb | | 8 lb | - | 10 lb | 2 lb | - | 24 lb | 20/30 lb | 1.80 | 1.80 | 6 p |
|  Chicory (optional) | 3/4 | 3/4 | 1/2 | | 1 lb | 1/2 | 1/2 | 1/2 | 1/2 | | 5 lb | | 60 | 12 p/lb. |
|  Potatoes? | - | 1 lb | 3 lb | - | - | - | 10 lb | - | - | not done | | | | |

diagram. The first thing is to decide what fruit and vegetables will be ordered that week. The list should contain:

(a) either potatoes or onions. These come in large quantities (56lb) so we order them alternating weeks so as to ensure we get a big enough quantity ordered by the households to buy a 56lb bag. Both potatoes and onions keep.

roughly we should expect to pay for that quantity.

Buying

We use Spitalfield Market in North London as it is near and small enough to be easy to get the hang of, while providing all we need. We aim to get there between six and seven a.m. so as to (a) get the foods we want before they run

(a) the unit price, i.e. price per lb or per item.

(b) the cost of each household's order, item by item, and finally the total, with portage added.

(c) whether the total of all the orders is the same as the total of money you have written down that you spent. If your maths are hopeless a little adjustment is allowed but it *should* tally.

You make out a bill for each household with items, price per item, quantity, and price to that quantity and total.

Typical bill from that order:

Grapefruit
10 @ 3.5p 35p

Oranges
6 lb @ 6p 36p

Mushrooms
1/2 lb @ 15p 7 1/2

Lettuce 1 @ 4p 4p

Green Pepper
2 @ 15p 30p

Broccoli
6 lb @ 3 1/2p 20p

Cooking apples
8 lb @ 6p 48p

Chicory 1 lb @ 12 1/2p 12p

total 2.23

+ porterage 18

£2.41

Distribution

All the food and the bills and the book are taken to a central place at 10 a.m. We used the garden of a large house in which one of the households was squatting, now we use different gardens.

You need at least two scales. A box is put out for each household with its bill beside it. Each person chooses a fruit or vegetable to distribute and weighs out the orders, putting them in each box. We do this because the market quantity may vary. Sometimes there are more and sometimes less than we had been told were in the boxes. So, the variations are evenly distributed between all the households. If each household came along and took its own order from the boxes and went off, the last household might be left with all the rotten ones, or none at all, or a huge surplus. We all share the luck of the market or its shortcomings. At this stage, the boxes for each household begin to look like some cornucopia of greens, and reds, leaves and fruits, and especially in summer, it's a lovely sight. We pay our bills to the people who did the shop that week and the book passes on to the next household for the next week. We carry off the spoils and look forward to a week's good eating.

Setting up a Co-op

We would be happy to show people how this works in action, so get in contact through Spare Rib, if you want any more information.

Griselda Pollock

CLASSIFIEDS

We are in the middle of reorganising and greatly expanding our classified section. Next month we'll include an ad form to make things easier.

Rates:

5p per word, 10p caps. £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad.) 50p for box numbers.

Payment:

Ads. must be prepaid and sent to Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh st. London W1A 4XS. Please make all cheques and PO's payable to Spare Ribs Ltd.

Conditions:

Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

Copy date:

1 st of each month for that month.

Jobs

Workers Co-operative: Young expanding housing association working as co-operative under worker and tenant control need architect/building surveyor for conversions and new work: flexible hours: £2340 (under review) write to Southwark and Lewisham Group, Solon Housing Association Ltd., 381 Clapham Road, SW9 9BT

Combination at the Albany.

The Albany is a community Action Centre in Deptford: a depressed inner London Dockland Area in the throes of redevelopment. The Combination at the Albany Empire is part of an arts development project with a recently opened Community Cabaret Theatre with a resident theatre company.

We're looking for:

A Tough General Manager to consolidate, extend and innovate the theatre side of the project. It's a very challenging and creative job for the right person.

We're also looking for:

A Publicity Officer to help us create a new, participating and involved audience for this unique new entertainment facility. This will involve close contact with a wide-ranging community groups, with local and national media to find and promote the image of Deptford's entertainments.

We're also looking for:

An actress who can sing (feel more important than technique) personality and punch more important than anything. Write with details: Jenny Harris. The Combination at the Albany, Creek Rd, London SE8.

Earn a spare time income at home, rush sae. Dept. SR1, D/301,82 Trinant Terrace, Pentwyn, Crumlin, Newport, Monmouth, NP1 4JJ

Books etc

At Last! An international directory/bar and club guide especially for Gay Women. 700 listings/20 countries, including USA and Canada. Send £2.00 only or order C.O.D. from the Girl's Guide, 70 Pembroke Road, London W8. (No callers) Also now on sale in London at: Compendium, 240 Camden High St, NW1, Sterling's Bookstore, 57 St. Martin's Lane, WC2

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

Women's Books, wide range available from 11 Waverley Rd., Bristol 6.

Women's Liberation Workshops, 38 Earlsam St, London WC1. Huge range of books now available, send SAE for list.

Nuclear Testing can mean cancer, damaged babies, and war. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament fights against all nuclear weapons. Keep in touch by reading Sanity - £1 per year. CND, 14 Grays Inn Rd., London WC1

Anti-Apartheid News describes what life is like in Vorster's South Africa, carries news of the liberation struggle in South Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia and Portugal's African colonies, exposes British collaboration with apartheid - and involves you in the fight against it. 10 issues a year. Membership of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (which includes subscription to AA News). £2 pa: subscription only, 75p pa. Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte St., London W1. Tel. 01-580 5211

Non-sexist children's books. Publisher seeks authors. Box No. 271

Sappho Magazine. Published by homosexual women for all women. Monthly 40p inc. postage. BCM/PETREL, London WC1V 6XX. Meeting first Monday each month. Info: time/venue write to BCM/PETREL.

Edinburgh's largest selection of gay and women's liberation books and pamphlets available at Shirlee's Stall, Greyfriars Market, 14 Forrest Road.

New Design W.L. Badge. 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. postage) From Sisterhood Books, c/o 22 Great Windmill st, London W1

Groups

Childrens Community Centre. People wanted to help set-up a nursery for 2-5 year olds, emphasis on parental control and participation, flexible hours of attendance but open 8.30 am - 6 pm. Lewisham/Greenwich area. Contact Birgit Everatt, 62 Vanburgh Park, SE3 7JQ. Tel: 858-5142

Luton, Womens Action Group - meets at Partisan Books, 34 Dallow Road, Luton, Beds. on Wed. evening at 8pm. Kids welcome. Tel: 0582-597932

Join Friendly Groups of young people (20-35) with similar interests going out together in London meals/films/shows/etc. London Linkup: 278-6783-4 (office hours)

Homosexual/Bisexual Women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice - make it louder! Meetings and socials throughout Britain. Send 9 x 4 sae to CHE (332), 28 Kennedy Street, Manchester 2

General

Gentle Ghost services include: artists cooking, decorating, domestic services, dressmaking, gardening, journalism, research, removals, secretarial and teaching.; but try us for anything and we may be able to help. 01-603 2871 services; 603 2865 removals; 603 3729 restaurant, 603 8983 help advice and information. 33 Norland Rd, London W11.

Elocution, Drama, Voice-production or improve your English. Ring 794-2941

Feminist Cook (experienced) wants part-time work (10am-3pm) weekdays starting mid-sept. Box no. 273

Woman Psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies Highgate area Tel: 01-348 5593

Women At Home can study for interior design diploma through accredited correspondence course. Colour prospectus from Dept. SR, Rhodoc International, School of Design, Rhodoc House, Yelverton, Devon PL20 6DY

Female/female exclusive introductions: highly confidential service for release, friendship, liberation, etc. SAE - "Lesbos and Ariadne", The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT

Gentle Ghost Help. Advice and information. If there is no-one you can share your problems with or if you are suffering from the unrealities of our materialist society, come along to 33 Norland Rd., W11. (2nd floor) where there will be someone you can talk to (in private); or phone 01-603-8983 Mon-Sat 10am-6pm.

Carpets ex - Exhibition (Ideal Home/Olympia/Film Sets) 20p - 75p Per sq. yd. Half a million pounds worth of new carpets, bedding and furniture in stock. Vast selection, Tretford Cord half price! Immediate delivery or cash & carry. Fitting within days. Expert mail order service. Estimates free.

Our home advisory service is as near as your telephone: 01-579 2323. 9am - 6pm.

Early closing Monday

Late Night Friday 8 pm.



Sapphire Carpets & Furniture Warehouse 14/16 Uxbridge Road, Ealing W.5. (Car park alongside Ealing Town Hall)

Travel

Guaranteed Low Cost Jet Flights

Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Tokyo, Bangkok, India, Pakistan, Tehran, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Nairobi, Morocco, Tunis, Canary Islands, Greece and Rest of Europe.

Jet - Set Travel, 5th Floor, 62 Oxford Street, London, W1. 01-637 1971 / 580 3298

I'm Planning to ramble 'round the world' by motor-bike, starting early '75/When I get enough money together. Companion(s), addresses, advice, suggestions of lucrative employment or cheap BMW 500 welcome. Liz Mahoney, Pier House Kirn, Dunoon, Argyll.

SHORTLIST

compiled by Michele Roberts
Feel free to send any information
to Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9
Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS

I was going to include in this space a cartoon I'd drawn ... but my purse got ripped off on the way to the Spare Rib office with the cartoon inside it ... plus all my money, — £4 ... the police said Huh, we all know journalists earn a lot of money ... and refused to put MS on the form ... Gone Missing?

agit prop

Friday September 13th to Sunday 15th. Conference on new women in a new society, organised by the Rationalist Press Association. Fee £11. For further information contact the secretary, RPA Ltd, 88, Islington High St, London, N.1.

Wednesday 18th September. St John's Wood women's trial. The case of the New Inn incident continues at Marylebone Magistrates court. Cross-examination of police still in progress. Thanks for your support so far; see you all there.

Saturday September 21st to Sunday 22nd. Conference on the theoretical problems of the tactics and strategy of women's liberation as a mass movement. Registration £1, students and claimants 50p, payable to Women and Socialism Conference. For further information contact: Jill Lamport, 26, Longsdale Road, Harborne, Birmingham. Tel: 021-4277433.

Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign. There will be a meeting sometime in September of WACC groups in the SW region. Sorry I haven't been able to give a definite date; none available at time of going to press. Contact Kate Teller, Tel: 0249-50959, or Bristol WACC, c/o the Women's Centre, 11, Waverley Road, Bristol, for more information. A planning meeting for WACC groups in the Midlands and North is being organized for the same month, to be held probably in Nottingham. Contact Rose Knight, 3, Dunlop Avenue, Lenton, Nottingham. Discussion at both conferences will probably centre around (1) an approach to the Lane Report (2) the Abortion Act (3) demands around facilities for abortion, contraception and sterilization on the National Health. Both these conferences are being held in order to plan for the second national WACC conference in November (details in forthcoming Shortlists); suggestions and ideas should be sent to either of the addresses given above.

Accommodation. The Lanchester Polytechnic Students Union is holding a conference on accommodation at the Coventry site of the Lanchester Polytechnic, Priory St, Coventry, on the 6th, 7th and 8th September. The general aims of the conference are, briefly, to promote a greater understanding of accommodation problems on a national scale, to relate regional and specific community problems to this, to discuss short and long term methods of alleviating the problem, and to attempt to form a policy for the solution of the problem on a national basis. Food and accommodation will be provided at a cost of £7-£11 per head. For those of us who have problems scraping up the rent each week, let alone a similar sum to give us the luxury of discussing our exploitation, the Union hopes to provide some kind of subsidy. Booking forms and further information from Pete McLaren and Phil Dunn at the address given above.

bristol women's house

Women in Bristol have been working for more than nine months to find accommodation for battered wives and their children. They are hoping to move into a large house in the centre of the city in August.

They need furniture or furnishings of any sort, and money for insuring the house, decorating some of the rooms, and buying items they think they're unlikely to be given. They need at least £300 to get started. Cheques should be made payable to Bristol Women's House Project, and sent to 11 Waverley Road, Bristol 6. You can also telephone Angela Rodway, Bristol (STD code 0272) 292763 if you can supply any stuff, e.g. fire guards, baby clothes, clothes horse, rubber sheets, etc.

arts

The camera and Dr Barnardo.

This exhibition, which has been running since July 25th, closes on September 29th. Go and see it if you can. It's organized by Valerie Lloyd, who is on the staff of The National Portrait Gallery, and is showing at 15, Carlton House Terrace, London SW1. These photographic portraits of children before and after the latter were herded off the streets and into the Homes, besides being visually fascinating, have an ambiguous identity, used as they were by Barnardo as publicity value for the work of the Homes, as case-history records, and as identity records for the police should any of the 'little vagrants' subsequently stray from their new role of 'little workmen'.

Oxford Theatre Festival. Two of the Festival offerings at the Oxford Playhouse which are likely to be of interest are 'The Dame of Sark' and 'Saint Joan'. The first, by William Douglas Home, with Celia Johnson in the title role, examines the character of the late Dame, Sybil Mary Hathaway, and her relationship with the occupying German army during the Second World War; the second, by Shaw, with Julia Foster as Joan, is the first major revival for several years of a portrait of a battling woman of a completely different sort.

books

Woman-Maitraya 4. For people concerned with the real meaning and possible results of women's liberation 'Woman-Maitraya 4' is another insight into what it might mean in terms of a whole liberation, that of men, women, children and consequently the world. It is a collection of excerpts and essays by men and women dealing with the feminine element of the psyche (feminine/psyche as opposed to feminine/biological) through investigation of woman as goddess, priestess, Eve, woman and alchemy and male-female polarity in oriental and western thought. Also with some of the myths and misinterpretations

since before Christ, from the beginning of the patriarchal society when these polar tendencies being ignored destroyed the integrity of the whole. It questions why many so-called female characteristics such as compassionate love and pity have taken on superficial connotations, and are considered rather weak emotions to display to the world rather than as integral parts of each being. There is however in several sections of the book the thought that woman has always accepted her role and is therefore just as much to blame for her position, instead of noting that it has been hard for those women struggling for liberation without the knowledge and support of others - which they now have. Or, that since liberation (which I didn't know we'd yet reached) women have tried only to imitate men's worst qualities and so are destroying their own feminine psyches ... rather negative generalizations. This book is published by Shambala Publications Inc.

Cynthia Beatt

films

Gunvor Nelson/Anne Severson. Spare Rib readers will remember Anne Severson's description of the making of her film 'Near the Big Chakra' in issue No. 20, and people who went to the Spare Rib benefit weekend in July were able to see her short film *Riverbody*. Anne's films are always surprising and worth getting to see. *Animals Running* is included in the National Film Theatre's season "The New Avant-Garde," with Gunvor Nelson's films *Take Off*, *Kirsa Nicholina* and *Moons Pool*. There is no doubt that Gunvor Nelson is one of the most powerful, least self-indulgent of experimental film makers. *Take Off* shows the ultimate conclusion of a striptease, and *Kirsa Nicholina* is of a woman giving birth at home. When it was shown at the I.C.A. people were standing by with smelling salts to revive the people who staggered from the theatre. The National Film Theatre, Monday September 2, 6.15, 8.30 pm.

Dorothy Arzner. Writing about the early days of the film industry Claire Johnston commented, 'As the industry grew, the high capital investment involved in film production inevitably meant that the industry became a stronghold of patriarchal power... The greater the financial investment in a film, the less likely that it would be entrusted to a woman. Under such conditions it is remarkable that any women at all managed to develop a coherent body of work in the cinema; a few succeeded ... notably Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino in America.' Two of Dorothy Arzner's films are being shown at the N.F.T., *Honour Among Lovers* and *Merrily We Go to Hell*, both made in 1932. The latter is a study of a rich woman who marries against her father's wishes, and is then thrown over for another woman. *Honour Among Lovers* charts a secretary's relationship with her boss. *Honour Among Lovers* National Film Theatre Thursday August 15: 6.15. 8.30. *Merrily We Go to Hell* Sunday September 15: 6.15. 8.30. R.P.

publications

I've concentrated on publications this month simply because there are so many around at the moment that make good reading.

Sexual politics of sickness. Glass Mountain pamphlets nos 1 and 2, *Witches, midwives and nurses*, and *Complaints and disorders*, both by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, published by the Feminist Press, 1973, can be obtained from or through most left bookshops, or, if all else fails, from the Feminist Press, SUNY College, Old Westbury, Box 334, N.Y. 11568, USA, price \$1.65 and \$1.50 respectively, p. and p. not included. The two pamphlets complement each other with analysis and description from different perspectives to form a starting point for women collectively to think about and deal with the sexism basic to present western medical technique and practice. *Witches, midwives and nurses* provides more than a justification for the current self-help movement by siting it firmly in history, tracing the transition from women's roles as the unlicensed abortionists, nurses, counsellors, pharmacists and anatomists of mediaeval society to their situation as purely ancillary workers today. By concentrating on two aspects in particular of the male takeover in health care, the suppression of the witches in mediaeval Europe and the rise of the male medical profession in 19th century America, the authors expose the class and sexual politics of the male establishment's active takeover; to this day, women's medical practice has thrived in the midst of rebellious lower class movements which have struggled for a people's culture, whereas male professionals (witness the BMA's stance over paybeds at the moment and their threat to refuse to implement a free contraceptive service on the NHS) serve the ruling class both medically and politically, and owe their victory not to the development of modern scientific technology or women's failure to take on healing work but to the intervention of the ruling class whose interests they served. *Complaints and disorders* gives a perspective on the social role of male-controlled medicine by describing its prime contribution to sexist ideology in describing women as sick and as potentially sickening to men. The approach is again largely historical, siting medicine within the invocation of science in general by the ruling class in the period studied (approximately 1865 to 1920) to justify the social inequalities imposed on the basis of race and class as well as sex, this period having been chosen for study for the exposure of the pronounced shift it embodies from a religious to a bio-medical rationale for sexism. Although the medical system is currently strategic to women's oppression it is also potentially strategic to women's liberation: women are dependent on the medical system for the most basic control over their reproductivity. Given this, I think that a more detailed analysis linking our medical exploitation to our general oppression within capitalism

would have been useful, as well as a reminder that capitalism is likely to absorb for its own ends any purely reformist demands that we may make; however, the pamphlets do avoid a simplistic liberal reformist approach by not only describing the raw sexism of medical theory and practice but also emphasizing that change must be fought for within the wider struggle for control of the social options available to us and control over the social institutions now defining them.

Red Rag. The summer issue of *Red Rag*, feminist marxist quarterly, is now out. Special 32-page issue is packed with discussion and evolving theory around education, ideology and collusion, women in Chile, the politics of sexuality, the nurses' struggle, women as students, and a perspective on our fight for abortion and contraception, as well as news and reviews. Obtainable from left bookshops, price 15p; letters, articles, donations, orders for subscriptions to *Red Rag*, 9, Stratford Villas, London NW1.

Women and the Welfare State. Also out is *Red Rag* pamphlet no.2, *Women and the Welfare State*, obtainable as above, price 20p, by Elizabeth Wilson, a member of the magazine's collective. At the same time as there is increasing politicisation of women within the women's movement, a growing understanding of the role women play in the private reproduction of labour power in the home has been evolved; this last is the activity around which the enmeshing net of the welfare state has been thrown. Elizabeth Wilson's historical and analytical exploration of its workings, from her perspective as marxist social worker, forms a useful contribution to on-going attempts to produce a radical and coherent critique of the manipulation of the social professions by capitalism, and as such should provoke some helpful discussion.

Case Con. *Case Con's* special women's issue is another tool in this struggle towards understanding and practising the feminist struggle within a marxist perspective. Articles include discussion on the reproduction of labour power, women's work, women in white-collar unions, women in prison, battered women, the sexist ideology of casework, and women and therapy. Obtainable from left bookshops or from Case Con, Flat 3, 55, Highbury Park, London N5, price 15p, plus postage.

Women together. CHE activist paper no.1 reports on a meeting of women from the gay movement and from the women's movement which took place in order to discuss the many points of agreement and similarity between the two and also honestly to explore some of the differences of perspective, which can crudely be summed up as radical feminist versus marxist, but which exist within both movements. Price 15p, obtainable from CHE, 28, Kennedy St, Manchester M2 4BG.

Marxism and feminism. This pamphlet by Charmie Guettel is a critical examination of feminist thought since the 18th century, from a marxist perspective, which after 62 pages of highly compressed argument concludes that the liberation of women depends on socialism, and that the further development of socialism depends in part on the further liberation of women. Interesting as a quick introduction to marxist thought, even if it over-simplifies the analyses we have yet to develop. Obtainable from the Women's Press, Ste. 305, 280, Bloor St, Toronto, Canada.

Health Team. The summer issue of the journal of the health student section of the NUS has been out since June, price 10p, obtainable from left bookshops or 15a, Alexandra Mansions, West End Lane, London, NW6. Articles include discussion of the nurses' struggle, mental handicap, prison medicine, medicine in the Portuguese colonies, and the health student movement, as well as letters and reviews.

Trucker's Bible. The 1974 edition of this is better-informed, bigger, more interesting, and illustrated with cartoons. It contains information on the drug laws of just about every country in the world; essential reading for anyone leaving on a late summer holiday who may score, smuggle or simply smoke dope while they're away. You can get it from Release, 1, Elgin Avenue, London, W9, 75p plus 10p postage.

West Kent Weasel. The summer edition of this local info and news magazine now out, price 2p on the streets and from Nick Cater, Bowmans Orchard, Burlings Lane, Knockholt, Kent. The editors would like to hear from local women involved in the women's movement; a good idea, judging by their all-male editorial collective and sexist-flavoured content.

overseas

Hundreds of Chilean women have been arrested and tortured, and progressive programmes intended to improve the position of women in Chile have been discontinued since the Allende government was overthrown last September. Reliable reports have been received that mass rapes have taken place in prisons, and women that are now pregnant with the children of unknown soldiers have been refused abortions. Other reports refer to the torture of children.

In September groups throughout Britain will show their opposition to the present Chilean regime in a national solidarity campaign. If you can help, please contact *Ad-Hoc Committee for Support to the Women of Chile*: Tracy Ulltveit-Moe, 15 Gibson Square, London N1 (226-9459), or at Amnesty (404-5831).

Opportunities in Building/Architecture

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More women and girls are looking to the Construction industry for career opportunities. At Ewell County Technical College we run a two year part-time day and evening course for those with suitable minimum qualifications. The new session commences in September, 1974.



Further details from:
Head of Department,
Department of Construction Studies,
Ewell County Technical College,
Reigate Road, Ewell, Surrey.
Tel: 01-394 1731 ext. 230

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Michael Ann Mullen

Info...Odds & Sods...A

education

Dear Spare Rib,
I left school at 16, 3 'O' levels, had various jobs, then started living with my boyfriend and bore our child three months ago. (I'm just 20). I am just getting over 'post natal depression' and now look to the future. I think the best thing for me to do would be to further my education as soon as my son is old enough to go to nursery school (in a year I think). My health visitor told me she would find Joseph a place at nursery with a few weeks notice, so in that respect I am lucky, but I would be grateful if you could advise me on any of the following questions.

Are there colleges that cater for the likes of me (i.e. housewives with few qualifications)? Is an unmarried mother living with someone entitled to a grant? If not, can one claim supplementary benefit and still attend college? Much love and best wishes,
Evelyn Boon,
Barnes.

* You don't mention what kind of thing you'd like to study so first of all I suggest you write to your local education authority and the ILEA to find out what sort of colleges exist and the kind of courses they run and decide what you'd like to do. You may find that the course you decide on requires further 'O' or 'A' levels before you can begin. Now, I don't know about other local education authorities, but the ILEA would require you to go through something called an 'exceptional circumstances scheme'. This would entitle you to a grant to do 'O' or 'A' levels only if your schooling had been interrupted by special circumstances.

If you do have the right 'O' or 'A' levels to study the course you have chosen, whether or not you qualify for a grant is entirely up to the discretion of the education authorities and will depend on the course, the college and on your particular circumstances.

Next, your application for Supplementary Benefit would be favourably considered if you had a grant which purely covered your fees and you had no other source of income. But, of course, if the fact that you were living with someone became known, your supplementary benefit would be scrapped.

Finally, if you have difficulty in getting into a local college, why not try one of the Open University Courses (you study at

home, and fees are very low with grants available at discretion of local authorities). There are five basic foundation courses, Humanities (Arts), Change in Industrial Society (Social Sciences), Mathematics, Science and The Man-Made World, which every entrant has to do and if you simply want to do something for your personal satisfaction you could stick to one of them or continue to complete a degree course. The address is P.O. Box 48, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AB.

discrimination

Dear Spare Rib,
After a long coach journey from Leeds to Middlesborough, dying of thirst, I went to look for a snack bar or pub where I could buy a drink. I found only a pub called the Green Tree near the bus station and wandered in. Finding two small rooms on my left without a bar and only a formica serving hatch which opened into the passage, I eventually discovered a door marked 'Bar' and walked in. A man followed me and said, "Can I help you, Luv" so I answered "No, it's O.K. I've found the bar now." He replied, "This is a men only bar - you won't get served here." Rather astonished I answered, "My goodness I've never heard of that before, it must be illegal." His reply was, "No it isn't, you won't get served here."

Anyway I went out to the formica hatch in the passage and asked, rather sharply whether I was allowed to have a drink and sat in a little room along with bus conductors and conductresses. I asked the girl next to me why it was a men's only bar and whether there were strippers or anything apart from a colour T.V. She said, "Haven't you ever been to Middlesborough before - they've got men only bars all over."

Was I right, is it against the Anti-Sex Discrimination Act? I don't suppose they'd have dared say, 'No blacks served here' or this a "Whites only bar." I really did feel upset and second class, although it's only a petty incident. - there's no point in destroying something men like just out of spite, but I did feel humiliated.
Thank you,
Alison Hull,
Leeds.

* According to the Licensed Victuallers Association, until the Sex-Discrimination Act is

passed, any landlord is entitled to refuse a woman entry to a bar and if he wishes to retain 'Men Only' bars. Disgusting isn't it!

groups

Dear Spare Rib,
I hope to move to Leeds within the next couple of months, and want to get involved in the movement there, so would anyone there please send me details of who to contact.

I'm also looking for accomodation for myself and 7 month old baby, so if anyone in Leeds is in a similar position and wants to share, please get in contact.

Yours, Janie Nicolle,
The Anvil, Letcombe Regis,
Wantage, OX12 9LA.

Other women looking for anyone else interested in starting groups in their area.

Isabel Chewter,
32 Angus Court,
West Parade, Peterborough.

Angela Doublet,
24a Hammelton Road,
Bromley, Kent.

Lorraine Mee,
No. 1, Flat 12,
Redlane Court,
Addington Road,
Reading, Berks.

J.C. Blake,
96 Clinton Road,
Bow, London, E.3.

Christin Arango,
14 Brett House,
Putney Heath Lane,
London, SW15.

Evelyn Boon,
Flat 3, 21 Lonsdale Road,
London, SW13.

Lynne Mussett,
10 Deepmore Road,
Rugby, Warcs.

Patricia Horn
Flat 1
14 St Andrews Road
Bedford

Vi Christensen
Wood Green area (N.22)
368-5944

Nicky Stones
6 Rodney Place
Bristol BS8 4HY
- wants to get in touch with other sea women or women who want to go to sea.

In order to print as many letters as possible, we've had to cut some of them

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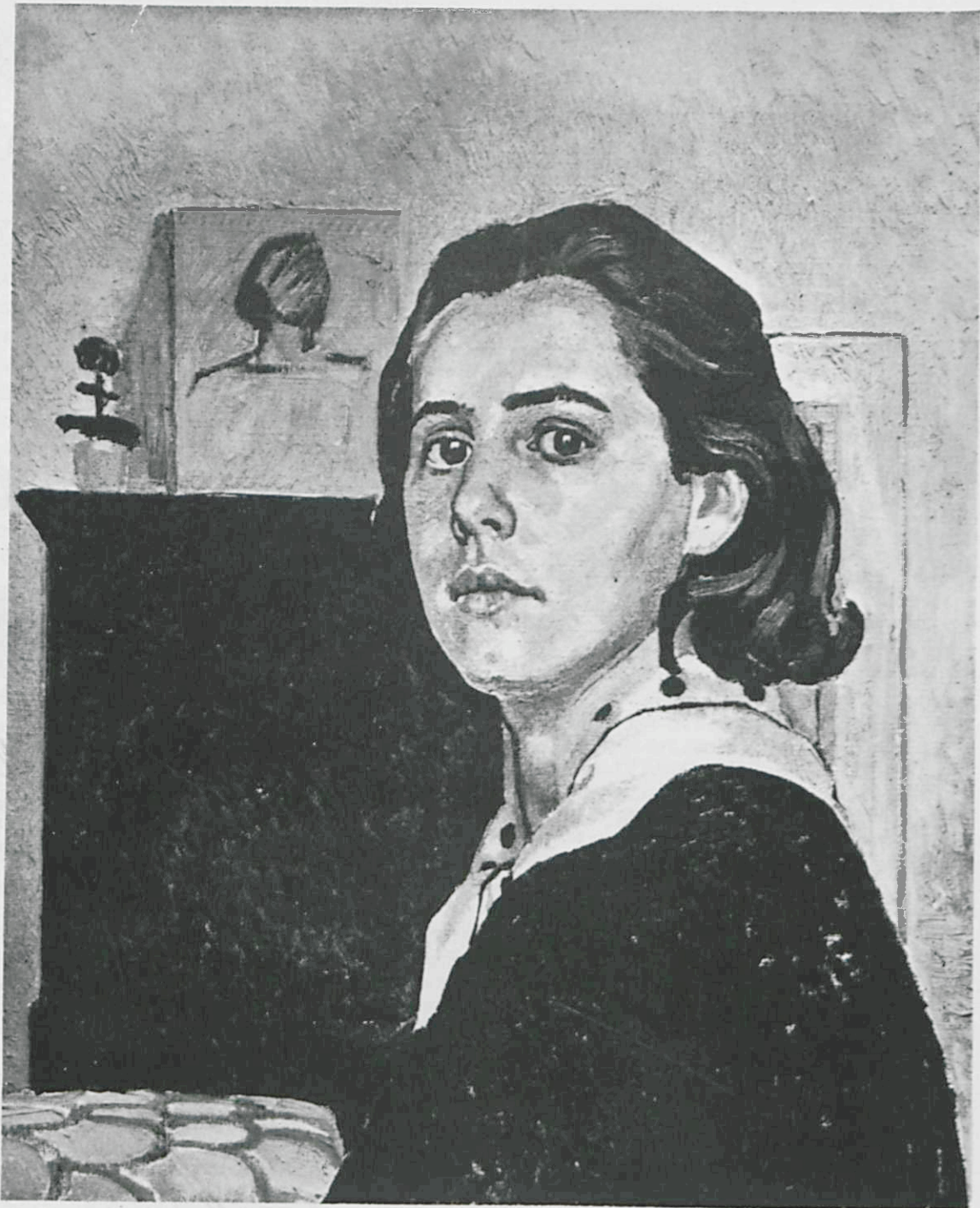
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SCHIZOPHRENIA



Self-portrait painted when the artist was first diagnosed as schizophrenic. She was twenty-two and had already had a one-woman exhibition of her work; Soon afterwards she destroyed all her paintings.

How are the people called schizophrenic to live in a society which calls them mad? "Community care" developed as an attempt to de-institutionalise long-stay psychiatric patients...but the definition of madness as outside civilisation, normality, rationality, doesn't go just because it is made public after centuries of being hidden in locked wards. Carol Morrell looks at two organisations set up to support the labelled - to campaign for improved conditions in and out of hospital, to give advice and assistance to their friends and relatives, and to raise money for research.

Schizophrenia is a much-heard word these days, one usually wrongly applied to a wide variety of mental states. But nobody who has had prolonged intimate contact with a schizophrenia sufferer will use the term loosely. The other side of the coin from the rather trendy application of the terms 'schizo', 'schizoid', etc, is the deep fear and shame associated with mental illness. This is something we have all experienced. The stigma about mental illness makes many families withdraw, to shield themselves and their ill member from incomprehension and jeers. While humanly understandable, this has the bad effects of isolating the family from needed contacts with others in

similar situations, and compounding the isolation which every sufferer from mental illness endures.

Whatever we think causes schizophrenia, and the various theories range from hereditary predisposition to biochemical dysfunctions to environmental stress, and to a mixture of all, two things are clear. There is no widespread medical or psychiatric agreement on causation, at least partly because recent extensive research throughout the world has so far been unable to pinpoint a single causal factor. It follows from this fact that no one treatment has proved entirely effective.

Notwithstanding the difficulties and differences of opinion surrounding diagnosis, it should be re-listed that one quarter of the beds in hospitals are occupied by patients who at one period of their illness have been diagnosed as schizophrenic.

It seems probable that different treatments will be suitable for different people. Whatever treatment is followed, it is known that the effects of 'the schizophrenias' include a dissolution of the personality, an inability to maintain personal relationships, to withstand stress, usually wide swings in mood from apathy to aggression, vagueness, and inability to stick with a task or a course of action, and sadly, a gradual final descent into complete mental incapacity. Since the 1950's, drug therapy which

dealt with, their demands for documents, letters, precise answers, punctuality, are too great. In most cases the families and friends must do the coping. While they may be genuinely pleased to have their friend son, daughter or husband back from hospital, the nationwide complaint is that they have received insufficient information or support from either psychiatrists or local social services. And what *does* happen to the discharged patient whose only contact is, simply unable, to cope with the entire situation?

A letter to *The Times* in May, 1970, by the parent of a sufferer from schizophrenia pointed out all the difficulties faced by families, and received wide response from people with similar experiences. A group formed, calling itself

those in their care.

The first project of the Fellowship has been a systematic survey of relatives' difficulties and problems, carried out under the general aegis of the Institute of Psychiatry, University of London, and under the supervision of Professor J. K. Wing and Clare Carr. The survey, with recommendations, has now been published. It will be made available to the hospitals, local authorities, professional bodies and other agencies concerned with the community care of people with schizophrenia.

The fellowship attempts to establish local organizations throughout the country. Membership will give relatives of sufferers the sense of belonging to a national society run by relatives for relatives whose sole object is to secure a better life for people with schizophrenia and their families. You may contact them to inquire whether there is a group in your area at: The Schizophrenia Fellowship, 23 Denmark Rd., Kingston upon Thames, Surrey.

The Schizophrenia Association of Great Britain is also a registered charity. Its emphasis and aims are rather different from those of the Schizophrenia Fellowship, but of course there is overlap in the determination of both charities to provide positive help for the schizophrenia sufferer and his or her family, as well as to bring their needs to public attention. The Association's aims are:

1. To bring pressure to bear on the government for far more money to be given for biochemical research into the chemical cause of schizophrenia;
2. To rid people of their fear of schizophrenia so that they may begin to talk freely and openly about it, and so help one another;
3. To care for the welfare of sufferers.

The Schizophrenia Association holds that both schizophrenia and manic depression are caused by a dysfunction in one of the chemicals supplying energy to the brain. That is, that schizophrenia in particular is a genetically-inherited, biochemically mediated disease, in which the brain suffers from a lack of essential nutrients and from hallucinatory toxins produced by the disease process. And also, that important factors in the restoration of sufferers to partial or total health could in some cases be both the proper diet and large dietary supplements of vitamins and minerals. Thus the Association's emphasis on the urgent need for research.

I do not have space to go into the various theories which have resulted from research and clinical practice in this country and elsewhere: the elaboration would be massive. However, for one theory and practice which has had remarkable results in Canada, I recommend the book 'How to Live with Schizophrenia' by Dr. A. Hoffer and Dr. H. Osmond, available from Johnson Publications, 11-14 Stanhope Mews West, London S.W.7. Mrs. Gwynneth Hemmings, The Schizophrenia Association of Great Britain, Llanfair Hall, Caernarvon LL55 1TT, will supply her collation of the information on biochemical causes of schizophrenia. The National Association for Mental Health, 22 Harley St., London W1N 2ED, is a good source of information on many matters, including the sorts of biochemical research into schizophrenia already being done in Britain. Both the Schizophrenia Fellowship and the Schizophrenia Association aim to help their members cope with the many often bewildering situations which arise with doctors and psychiatrists as well as with local social services. ●



'A Happy Christmas' was produced thirty years later.

relieves the more acute symptoms without basically altering the condition has enabled patients to be released from hospital, in order to rejoin their families or go to half-way houses. The Arbours Association and the Richmond Fellowship as well as some local councils, have done worthwhile work with half-way houses, but the places available have never equalled the numbers of schizophrenics discharged from psychiatric units. Sufferers whether on medication or not, cannot fend for themselves in the complicated world of out-patient departments, almoners, departments of employment and social security, inland revenue, hostels, local authorities, Industrial Rehabilitation Units, or jobs - while each of these organizations must be

the Schizophrenia Action Committee, and the Schizophrenia Fellowship grew out of this.

The Schizophrenia Fellowship is a charity, and its principal object is to act as a national organization for all matters concerning the welfare of sufferers from schizophrenia and to help their families and friends. It does not adhere to any one theory about the cause or treatment of schizophrenia. The emphasis of its work is twofold:

1. The improvement of community provision for schizophrenia; and
2. The giving of whatever help, advice and support which can be given to the relatives or friends of people with schizophrenia in order to ease their difficulties and improve the lot of

Continuing the series on new ways women artists are finding for working and exhibiting, Jenny Rodwell describes the A.I.R. gallery in New York.

Unlike the group of women whose work at Radnor Terrace was described last month, the women who founded A.I.R. gallery are determined to carve a place out for women within the existing art structure.



A.I.R.⁹⁷ Wooster St N.Y., N.Y. 10012

"Because women artists have always met with such difficulty in showing their work there has been strong pressure on women artists to produce work which conforms to already long accepted norms, if women want their work to be shown at all."

So said the twenty American women artists when they established A.I.R. – a women's co-operative art gallery in New York – more than two years ago. And there is little reason to think that attitudes have changed. For example, a big co-ordinated women's art show is taking place at the moment, in Philadelphia. One woman, Judy Bernstein – a member of A.I.R. – has been censored from the show by the male director of the Philadelphia Museum on the grounds that her work is offensive. The works are drawings of giant screws (screw-driver type, not sexual type). The director thinks these could be mistaken for penises. Apart from the interested speculation which has been expressed about the anatomy of the Museum director's own penis, Ms. Bernstein and the A.I.R. women are not amused.

"You only have to look around the galleries to see how few successful women artists there are," says Lorretta Dunkelman, one of the gallery's founder members. There are roughly three times as many contemporary male artists exhibiting work as there are women artists at any one time.

Although some of the reasons for this imbalance are obvious – the problems for women artists are the same as those of any professional woman trying to function in the existing male power structures – the women feel that in the arts there is another factor: In the past an artist was known by his or her name and the goods he or she produced. Today the media have created a "personality factor"; profiles, interviews, and biographies play a large part in any success story. If you're a man,

that is. It seems that, as far as the men in the media are concerned, women lack credibility as personalities.

"Women can go on exhibiting their work forever. This is why we need our own gallery." With these thoughts in mind, the first six members of the A.I.R. decided to start a gallery to show their own work and that of other women artists.

Finding and Running a Gallery

They looked through the Women's Art Registry, which is a collection of slides of work by women artists. (It is maintained by the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists, and is designed to guide dealers and exhibitors to the overlooked work of women). They found fourteen more women artists; no one sort of art was favoured. A.I.R. members' works include performances, conceptual art, sculpture, painting, drawing and printmaking. Prospective members had to be financially able to contribute to the maintenance of the gallery and willing to work on one of its committees.

After several months of making studio visits, a group of prospective members met. After viewing slides of everyone's work a few days were allowed for consideration. It was decided to incorporate as a non-profit organisation. The work necessary to find and maintain a gallery space was broken down into four areas, each of which was assumed as the job of a committee.

The gallery itself is salvaged from the derelict room in a Downtown Manhattan street of shabby warehouses and storefronts. There are several other galleries in the area – fugitives from the Uptown rents of Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue. A.I.R. stands for Artists in Residence. New York law states that these letters must mark any house where artists are actually living in their studios as a fire

precaution.

Having found the premises, the women divided themselves into four committees.

The legal committee obtained a lawyer who would accept art as payment for her services.

The job of the building committee, which turned out to be the hardest, was to organise the renovation of the gallery space. All members of A.I.R., and many of their friends, have worked on the actual repairing – electrical wiring, building walls, laying a floor, painting and plastering.

The publicity committee writes press releases, places advertisements and maintains a mailing list. The gallery gets about 200 visitors a week.



Rosemary Mayer de Medici. *Rayon acetates, cord, string, lace, netting*, 12' x 7'

Workshops: From Carpentry to Video

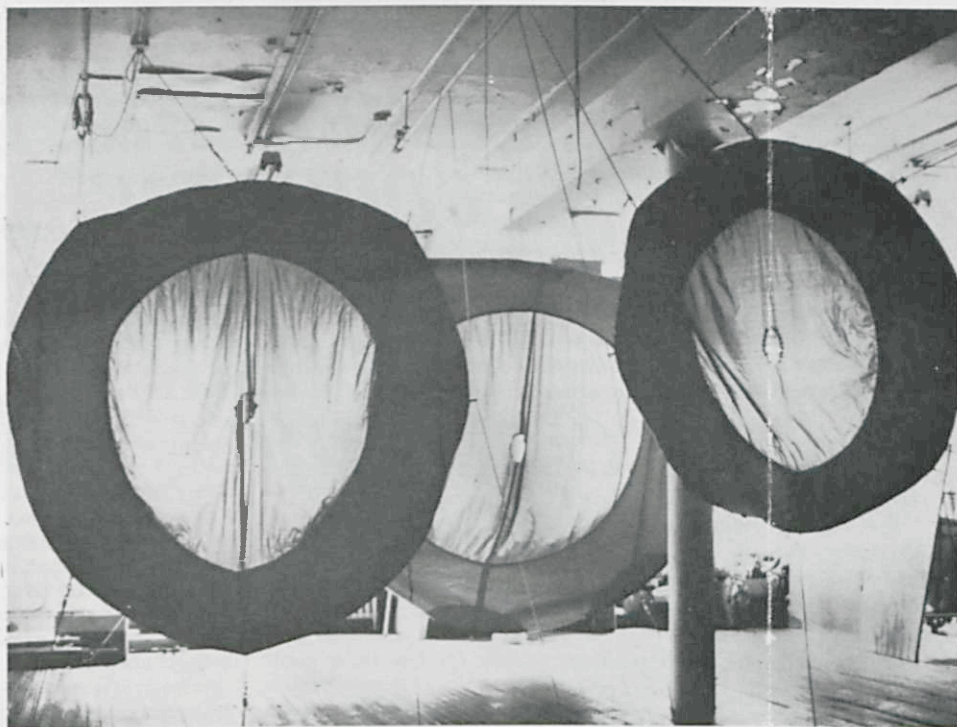
The grants committee developed the idea of A.I.R.'s functions further. They launched a Monday Programme and a Video Programme. The Monday programme is a bi-monthly workshop and discussion meeting which is open to everyone. The Video programme consists of process tapes of gallery artists and other women artists at work and talking in their studios. They are shown to schools and interested groups. For both these activities the gallery receives money from the New York Council on the Arts and from National Endowment, a federal grant organisation.

A major consideration in their Monday Programmes is to help women artists and students to get work, and also to help other professional women in the same way if possible. Topics are concerned with women artists. The workshops cover anything of vital interest to women involved in the visual arts, from carpentry to video, to special issues like getting work as a realist painter and the problems of women in art education. The workshops also provide a unique chance for women to enrich their own art by learning about techniques, materials, methods and approaches from areas other than the ones they are specifically involved in.

Solving The Selection Problem

A.I.R.'s members meet whenever it is necessary – whenever group decisions have to be made. The chairing of meetings is rotated and all questions are decided by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present. Each member is allowed her say, uninterrupted, on any point being discussed. At meetings, members are brought up to date on the progress of the committees by reports from committee heads – who have no other special function or authority beyond that of reporting to the membership.

The problem of which artists would show when was solved by drawing lots. The women show their work in pairs; for periods of three



Anne Healy. *Big balls, fabric and nylon rope.*

weeks. The season starts and ends with a group show.

Changing Self images

There are still twenty members. Two have left since the gallery started and have been replaced. One of the new members is a woman in her seventies. The average age of the women is around 35. Many of the women, like Blythe Bonen, have had their work exhibited in New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum.

After more than two years the women say the gallery is as strong as ever, and that the idea of a women-only gallery has been proven to be a working concept. At least four other galleries, modelled on A.I.R. have now been set up in the United States – two in New York and two

in Chicago.

Maude Boltz, who has been with the gallery since the beginning, says the gallery has caused "whole series of changes" in her life. It has made the difference between feeling like an amateur, a hobbyist, and feeling like a professional. "Before the gallery was formed I saw myself, and was invited by society to see myself, as a woman with a spare-time hobby, playing an inferior role in a world of professionals. Now people are looking at and remembering my work. I am getting more approaches for shows outside New York, for instance."

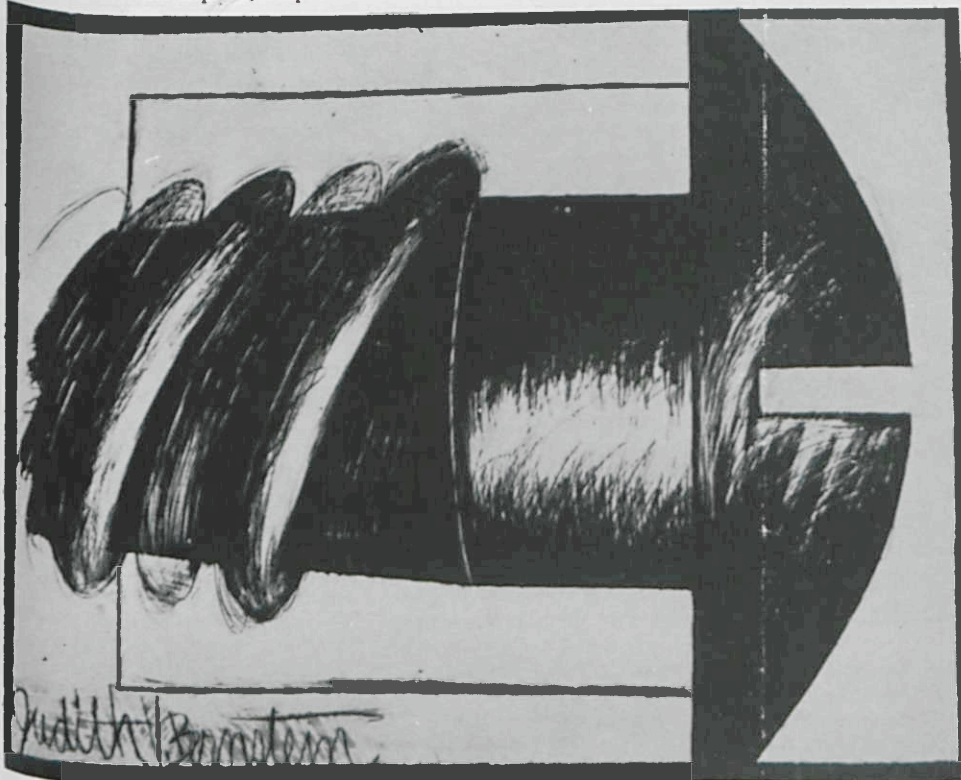
Maude Boltz graduated with a Masters Degree in painting from Yale in 1964. She found it difficult to be recognised as an artist. "I didn't realise that; I did not analyse it. I realised it afterwards when the gallery had been formed and when the situation had changed."

Barbara Zucker, another founder-member of the gallery, is a sculptor who works with hydrocal and celastic. She finds her work is "stronger" now than it was before.

A.I.R. still maintains its original principles. The members take their role as a "spreader of information" seriously. Many of the Monday programmes have been concerned with advising other women on the business of running their own gallery. The women have spoken to schools and colleges on the subject. They are also interested in any ideas that might lead to a temporary exchange of exhibition space.

"We have" say A.I.R. opened up new avenues of communication between our members. Friendships and exchanges of information and ideas have begun between our members, some of whom feel a real difference between their former semi-isolation in a male-dominated world and their present multiplicity of contracts.

"A.I.R. offers women artists a space to show work which is as innovative, transitory or unsaleable as the artist's conceptions demand, a rare opportunity for women artists. A.I.R. will change attitudes about art by women."



Judith Bernstein. *Hardware Series, charcoal on paper, 108" x 141"*

A Mars bar because I missed my train.

I plan, waiting,

The bathroom I would have liked to
have washed in.

Warm, exotic jars, clean, a shower,
No mould on the walls, or draughty windows.

The hats I covet

The shoes I see that would look better on me.

Out, Out, Out I cried at two

All the world ahead of docile, doll-child.

But I never did a thing about it.

Odds.

Want, want, want,

And another magazine,

Another facepack, paperback,
for the recordrack,

No comfort

Only the exultant moment then

Remorse, Cry.

I should have saved

I should commit, responsible...

I shouldn't pray for contact lenses

Capped teeth and cassettes

Posters, cameras, calculators

Typewriters, a portable T.V.

Holidays and health farms

Hairdos, salons, facials, massage

Yoga,

Oh how I dream,

When I don't have nightmares.

Fur coats, duvets, movie projectors

A car. A bike.

Suntan,

So I buy a Daily Mirror for the horoscope

My own financial times a la Virgo

And I dream.

Chances are I'll never win.

Every week I plan to stop outside coming in.

Earn every penny

Spend it all and more

Irresponsible with money

Whiskey, twinsets, costume jewellery

Cakes and chocolates

Endless letters for brochures

Lovely.

Cosmetics

Cotton wool, tampons

Tights and zips and cleaners bills

Repair shoes and dream of

New ones.

Bangles, scarves, necklaces, lace gloves

Espadrilles, longer skirts, undies

Electrolysis for more confidence

Bikinis, costumes wigs and photos.

Run from work to hide in bed

Dreaming, scheming, inside screaming

Tranquilisers and a sore head.

BLISS

I can't carry on

Its up at 06.15 tomorrow

BLISS

A rich man?

A premium bond?

A competition?

Gamble, let your mind ramble

Out, Out, Out, I cried as a child

Never a penny to my name

Myself and everybody's shame, Mama, Papa.

Manicure, pedicure, sauna, swimming

Run for the bus and splash my legs

In the stagnant puddle.

Buy me.

Buy me.

Buy me.

Jane Watts

consume

consume

consume

consume

consume

consume

consume

MOTTS
a Mars a day helps
work-rest and

(Susan Martin, dancer and performer in the revue.)

The production opened in the editorial offices of 'Knickers' a women's magazine. Models primped, preened and can-canned across the stage, fighting for the editor's eye and approval, to the sound of the Stone's 'Look at that stupid girl'. The audience laughed uproarously, but more I suspect, at the hip wiggles than at the message. This ambivalence was obvious throughout the production. The behaviour and attitudes attacked on stage still attracted the audience, and the performers themselves were obviously aware of the pull of the stereotypes otherwise they could not have put such conviction into their performances. Anne Harris, dancer and performer in the revue, commented...

"We don't feel we are selling our bodies because we are trying to say something but if people want to take it on that level, good luck to them."

Examining the content of the magazine; the cries of frustration from the letters pages, and the advice pages which defined women purely as adjuncts to men, the current cover girl turns on the editor. She accuses him and his magazine of failing to reflect women's past and present struggle and their needs today. Sheena Cameron who played the cover girl says: "It is very difficult if you want a career - you find yourself excusing your ideas. It is still accepted by many girls that all that normal women need is security, marriage, a home and children - which they will buy with their own sexuality."

The story developed through song and dance sequences, looking at different aspects of women's magazines; horoscopes, hints on how to keep your husband happy, the sexual sell in advertising etc. The audience laughed often, particularly at the ads which showed women being carried off by a man the minute they began using a particular product. There were serious moments; readings (from the Old Testament to Alice Rossi) and a sequence about the suffragettes. The latter with a dose of 'Shoulder to Shoulder' sentimentality was perhaps the least successful part of the show, and at odds with the energy and enthusiasm evident when the performers dealt with aspects of their own experiences.

The models finally came together and went on strike. But there was a scab amongst them, and the show ended, as it had begun, to the sounds of 'Look at that Stupid Girl', but with only one model gyrating in front of the editor.

Rosie Parker

THEATRE

'Knickers for Sale' by Sydenham School for Girls

'Knickers for Sale', a satirical review examining the role of women in society today, was a joint production by the staff and sixth formers at Sydenham School for Girls in London. Sarah Carter and Jill Henderson, both dance and drama teachers, wrote most of the material for the review but the ideas were developed by both staff and sixth formers out of their experiences in dance and drama classes.

"It's the only way to get across our feelings - otherwise people just switch off. If you try to talk seriously about women's equality no-one will listen, so we've got to get our message across through dancing, song and jokes."

BOOKS

The Feminist Papers ed. Alice S. Rossi Bantam 60p.

Alice Rossi has gathered together a useful collection of writings published by feminists during the last two centuries: from Abigail Adams and Mary Wollstonecraft to Virginia Woolf and most recently Simone de Beauvoir.

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The essays are very exciting and often moving to read, and, most important, one recognizes so much of what these earlier feminists are talking about: our problems don't seem to have changed very much.

Because of this continuity of ideas though, there is a danger that we will be deceived into thinking that the history of the women's movement has been one of gradual but steady progress. One must not forget that Rossi's choice is not limited to people active in a women's movement, and had it been, it would have been infinitely poorer. Mary Wollstonecraft may seem, in *The Vindication*, to be talking directly to us, but she herself was totally isolated from any social or political movement. She was rejected by society, and even by later feminists. Harriet Martineau saw her 'neither as a safe example, nor as a successful champion of women's rights'; and her book was not read for many decades after her death.

However, many of the same ideas do seem to flow through all the different essays - the desire for freedom and equality, and the need for a woman to find an independent self. In her introductions Rossie helps us to be critical about these ideas. She places the essays carefully within their historical and intellectual background, so we can see more clearly what is meant by, for example, freedom, and what the implications are in terms of action. She distinguishes the different intellectual traditions from which ideas about women have grown. On one hand there are those (e.g. Wollstonecraft, Fuller, and Mill) whose ideas flowed from the enlightenment and the French Revolution, and who had great faith in reason, and hence in education as a source of change; and on the other there are those in Engels, La Follette in the Marxist tradition who saw a need for more fundamental changes in the structure of society. In the section on women whose writings grew out of practical political experience, Rossi analyses the nineteenth-century women's rights struggle in America, but there are useful parallels for England. Our movement did not come so much from involvement in revivalism, temperance, and abolition, but it did come from practical politics (e.g. the fight against the Contagious Diseases Act), rather than intellectual analysis.

All these different threads of thought and action are present in our own thinking now, and I think that understanding their history will help us to sort out our ideas, and so to continue the struggle.

Catherine Gieve

Charmed Circle - Gertrude Stein and Company

by James Mellow
Phaidon £3.95

Gertrude Stein's name has been connected with a number of famous artists and authors - Picasso, Matisse and Hemingway among them. Yet her personal life remains an enigma.

MacBride, a correspondent with the

New York Sun remarked that what differentiated Gertrude was "The fact that she collected geniuses rather than masterpieces." But it was the relationships she made with people she 'collected' that reveal much more about her character. There were very few with whom she did not quarrel at one time or another. She was very close to Hemingway and they productively criticised each other's work. The break came because Alice Toklas disliked him, and he felt his masculinity was threatened when he realised the lesbian nature of her relationship with Gertrude.

Literary innovators Gertrude saw as rivals, hence Ezra Pound never formed part of her entourage. She liked to admire certain people from a distance, and some of her more successful

friendships were based on correspondence rather than face to face contact.

Her personality was undeniably strong, eccentric and unaccommodating; if people didn't fit in with her ideas there was likely to be a clash. One hot summer she sat for the sculptor Lyshitz but told a mutual friend that she found the sittings boring. When he confronted her with this, she replied:

"Listen I am fairly well known for saying things about anyone and anything, I say them about people, I say them to people, I say them when I please and how I please, but I mostly say what I think, the least that you or anybody else can do is to rest content with what I say to you." She was strangely naive in wondering why she did not see the sculptor again for many years.

At the same time she had a wry sense of humour. When she once gave a dinner party for some of the young artists she patronised, she arranged each one's work hanging opposite them. Everyone left the party feeling well-fed and especially favoured.

Often she was purely an observer, a "fatalist about human affairs". When a neighbour's friend committed suicide in a remote ravine, Gertrude remarked that she had been "inconsiderate" to cause people the bother of searching for her body. During a lecture tour in Chicago she was taken by the police around the seamier parts of the city. Entering a house where a murder had just been committed Gertrude coolly questioned the inhabitants about the details of the crime, disregarding their grief.

She extended this bland objectivity to her unsentimental recollections about her family. She had hated her father's unpredictable authoritarianism, yet claimed that he'd taught his children independence, "to be free inside them". Gertrude never seemed to have recognised the ambiguity of her own nature. While she certainly lived with a careless regard of norms - clothes, morals and behaviour - when she pleased, she was heavily dependent on certain individuals, initially her brother Leo. They shared a Parisian apartment and Bohemian life for a number of years. Hapgood, Leo's friend described Gertrude's devotion to her brother as "singular. . . she admired and loved him in a way a man is seldom admired and loved; it was part of her profound temperament".

The split with Leo came when she started to assert herself; professionally as a writer, and personally in her strong involvement with Alice Toklas, which lasted for the rest of her life. This undermined Leo's domineering position towards her, and there was bitterness on both sides before they became reconciled to the differences between them. Gertrude explored her feelings in *Two: Gertrude Stein and her Brother* - "The sound there is in them comes out from them. Each one of them has sound in them. There are two of them. One of them is a man and one of them is a woman. They are both living. They are both ones that quite enough are knowing. . ."

This style is esoteric and repetitive: like much of her earlier work it reflects a therapeutic attempt to come to terms with herself rather than any communication with, or awareness of, an audience.

Despite her problems with other rela-

tionships, Gertrude formed a lasting intimacy with Alice Toklas. Gertrude saw their relationship as a marriage, with herself as the male partner. Indeed, she refers to herself as a husband in some of the more veiled references to their involvement. Although she considered male homosexuality distasteful - for what reason is not clear - she believed that women felt no guilt in lesbianism as they did nothing to feel ashamed of.

Alice very much played a traditional secondary role to Gertrude - cooking, acting as secretary and arranging the practical aspects of her life. She would take aside the wives of the famous who came to visit Gertrude, so that they would not interrupt the lofty conversation. Oddly this chauvinistic ritual only applied to wives not mistresses. Alice was devoted to Gertrude, placing her writing before all else. Once she even walked around a field ringing a cowbell so that the sound might inspire Gertrude to creativity.

However Alice also had an iron will. Though Gertrude appeared to be the dominant partner, there were times when Alice's strength emerged. In *Farragut or a Husband's Recompense* Gertrude recalls a quarrel - "I can't remember the details. The first that I can remember is asking do you mean to deny that you heard me. . . Were you flattering me by voicing an objection. If so don't bother. I really don't mean to be a slave."

Gertrude always lived in a very protected environment, cushioned by the private income which came from her father's property dealings, and living mainly among the intellectuals of Paris. Yet it was her monumental ego - "Yes the Jews have produced only three original geniuses; Christ, Spinoza and myself" - that made her persevere with her writing where others would have baulked. For decades her work was published at her own expense, until *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, written in 1932, became a best seller.

She disliked all forms of analysis, especially literary reviews but said of her famous line - "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" "I think that in that line the rose is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years." She felt that by using repetition she could reach "the bottom nature of people". but was never able to explain this beyond saying: "I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that there was inside them. . ."

What is perhaps admirable, certainly remarkable, about Gertrude Stein considering the era in which she lived, is the way she selected her own path without reference to others. She sought to excel in several fields, including parapsychology and medicine, before she picked writing. Although she was aware of the enormous hostility towards women doing anything outside their 'traditional' role, she rejected women's suffrage as unnecessary and saw no value in collective activity. She experienced life on her own terms - to improve her health she hired a welterweight to box with her - and these terms were strongly founded in individualism.

Maggie Lomax



Following on from Camilla Nightingale's articles in issues 23 and 24, *CISSY* and the Children's Book Study Group are going to do regular reviews of children's books, both new and not so new, as well as feature articles every three or four months.

The Children's Books Study Group is a small London-based collective looking at the overall political content of children's books. At the moment, they are concentrating on how the family is portrayed in picture books.

Bedtime for Frances

by Russell Hoban

(illustrated by Garth Williams, Faber £1.00, paperback 25p)

first published in the U.S.A., is already a classic of the traditional children's book market and often appears on people's lists of favourites.

'*Bedtime for Frances*' is the first and best known of Russell Hoban's six picture books about Frances the badger girl. Like the other five books, "*Bedtime...*" is a 'learning to cope' book; it is about fear of the dark. The other books deal with jealousy, food fads, sibling rivalry, etc., and all tend to moralise heavily and wordily around 'problems'. But this book is a successfully discreet treatment of a universally familiar situation. Frances is frightened by real things in the dark, e.g. a dressing gown in a chair (looking like a giant), a crack in the ceiling, curtains flapping at the open window. Abiding by Dr. Spock, her parents react sympathetically but firmly. (Yes, she can have cake, no she can't watch TV). The use of animals in human roles allows children to identify with a situation that otherwise might be too near the bone.

Garth Williams' pictures are particularly successful in giving a child's perspective to the story, although their full power is lost in the reduced paperback size. This is a useful book for the very young, although Frances' badger family, in this and all the other books, is inevitably nuclear, cosy and comfortable and with well defined traditional sex roles. Dad reads the paper, with pipe and specs, in the armchair, while mum, in the pinny, serves the drink. On



the other hand, both parents put Frances to bed. And it's dad who is badgered in the night.

Meal One by Ivor Cutler

(illustrated by Helen Oxenbury, Heinemann £1.10)

This is a fantasy story about a single parent family in a typical terraced house, a subject lamentably under-represented in children's picture books. But untypically, mum is a real friend to Helbert her son. They play football, eat fish and chips with their fingers and happily collude in digging a hole in his bedroom floor and planting a plumstone - which instantly springs to life and shatters the constrictions of their home. This bizarre dream should once and for all dispel the picture book stereotype of the aproned mother. Here is a mum capable of having feelings and fun (and Helen Oxenbury illustrates this richly, even erotically).

But this mum is unique. She's got no problems - about the S.S., the neighbours or the outside world; or if she has, she doesn't let them come between her and her son. This mother-son relationship seems too good; they are pals without any competition from father, siblings or friends. What's going on here? Who puts the plum in Helbert's mouth in the first place? It's

mum. And it is she who calmly puts the clock back and saves Helbert's breakfast from the greedy plumtree; the intruder is banished with the dream.

While most fantasies return the characters and the reader to the status quo, the thin line between fantasy and reality in *Meal One* expands the realms of warm loving relationships. Despite its pre-war nostalgia, this is a good children's book... for adults, especially those looking for the archetypal loving and always available mum, who could also be a friend. On the dust jacket Ivor Cutler says "living in the present and loving oneself makes a good start". What we find in *Meal One* is Ivor Cutler living in the past and loving his mother.

Children's Books Study Group

In *CISSY* we have been looking at children's books for nearly four years and have found hardly any that we could unreservedly praise, although many that we liked. In this column we hope to be able to make positive recommendations but our intention is more to analyse on what level a book is acceptable. The presence of a

heroine, for example, may mean that the book is aimed at a specifically female audience and written on a "girls'" subject like ballet, horses or fashion.

The way in which libraries, reviewers, publishers' lists and often writers divide books into "for girls" and "for boys" seems to us the most insidious sexism of the lot.

Maria Gripe's *The Night-Daddy* (Chatto & Windus £1.35) is a shot in the right area. It is written as a diary in alternate chapters by two characters: a girl of about eight and a young man who babysits with her every night while her mother works as a nurse. For a start, Julia has no legal father: 'My mother isn't married and I'm glad about it.'

Her relationship with her night-daddy might be seen as an attempt to fill that vacuum but it is none the less real for that. The strength of the book is that the friendship is so equal in spite of differences of sex and age. The man learns a lot from the child and actually changes his opinions and actions through knowing her.

The book has its faults. The diary device is contrived and, because it doesn't run chronologically there are some irritating inconsistencies. Some of the conversation between the two characters is very precious and Julia is sometimes insufferable: "Mummy doesn't believe in God but I do."

Perhaps the most important character is the one that hardly appears: Julia's mother. Everything we know about her, that she has a job as a matter of course, that she works unsocial hours, that she will accept a male babysitter for her daughter, is presented with a calm matter-of-factness. Yet any thoughts that this character stimulates in a child reader will surely result in raised consciousness.

Mary M. Hoffman, *CISSY*

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Mountain Woman Blues

by Sheila Rowbotham



Hazel and Alice (Rounder Records #027)



Aunt Molly Jackson

Library of Congress recordings, collected by Alan Lomax (Rounder Records 1002)

Rounder Records are a collective. They issue traditional songs by working people and a record by women in womens liberation rock bands called Mountain Moving Day. They are not yet distributed in England. If you want to obtain their records write to them for details at, 186 Willow Avenue, Somerville, Massachusetts 02144 U.S.A.

The mining districts of East Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia have a double tradition of union militancy and music. In both these traditions women have had a crucial influence. The people came originally from English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish homes to farm and brought their songs with them. In the early part of this century industry moved south. Wages were low in the coal mines and the textile mills but were still more than could be earned on the farms. Attempts to organise met with bloody resistance from the employers. Many of the organisers were musicians and many were women. Songs like 'Girl of Constant Sorrow' and 'Which Side are you on' were written by miners wives who sang of the poverty and rebellion of the mining community. Some of the women were killed by National Guard troops and a textile worker and singer Ella Mae Wiggins murdered by gun thugs in 1929. Aunt Molly Jackson was an organiser, singer and midwife who was recorded by Alan Lomax in 1939. She was born in 1880, the daughter of a coal miner and preacher and accompanied him to picket lines from the age of five. She married Jim Stewart, a miner at 14, bearing two sons and training to be a midwife in Kentucky before she was 17.

Her work meant that she knew not only about union struggles but about womens personal and sexual lives. She delivered 884 babies to live 'on lentil beans and corn bread in log cabins full of cracks so big you could throw big cats and dogs through'. She understood the difficulty of rearing children in such circumstances. She learned about the feuds and conflicts between families and the womens beliefs in witchcraft and charms. On the record she tells how Ol' Aunt Jane was suspected of being a witch and was greatly feared. A neighbour's cow used to stray onto Aunt Jane's corn trampling it and she threatened to curse it so it would fall down and never get up. Next time the cow strayed sure enough she waved her hands three times over its back and it fell down. The neighbour was in despair for she depended on its milk. Only when the cow's owner promised to make sure it would never get out onto Ol' Aunt Jane's corn again would she kick it and bring it back to life. The fear of witches produced its own defences. Some people were commonly held to have powers against the witches. These witch doctors could make counter spells to negate the charms of the witches. Aunt Molly says there were still witchdoctors in Kentucky in the thirties though not so many as there had been earlier.

After Jim Stewart died she married Bill Jackson and worked in Harlan County as a nurse and midwife until 1931 when she was crippled by an accident and forced to leave the county because of her unique activities. Writers like John Dos Passos and Theodore Dreiser came to investigate a killing during a strike in Harlan County and took Aunt Molly back to New York with them to raise money and propagandise. She lived on the Lower East Side in the Depression and although she still spoke and sang she felt uprooted and lonely away from Kentucky. She was seen

either as a joke country person, hillbilly, or as a folk heroine - of interest not for herself but for what she symbolised politically.

Her songs on the record tell of the conditions in the mines and prisons, urging workers to join the union and resist. She sings too of political repression and how they called her a 'Rooshian red'. One of the saddest describes her poverty and isolation in New York. 'My heart it is breaking, it's Christmas eve night

I'm in the slums on the East Side without any light

I've no gas or electric to make myself a cup of tea,

Oh tell me fellow workers how can this be?

*Tell me fellow workers, how can this be
A home of the brave and the land of the free*

*Starvation and misery is all that is free
For poor hard working masses like you and me'*

She had waited for three days for the gas and electricity to be turned on. After she wrote the song it was nine o'clock at night and she went off to the police station to try and put in an emergency call. 'Listen I'm a very sick person' she told the police captain. But he said they couldn't do anything because it was a holiday. Aunt Molly took a dim view of this. Just because Jesus Christ had decided to be born one thousand nine hundred and thirty six years before she didn't see why she should sit without a cup of tea or a bite to eat. In Kentucky she had been poor but had friends, in New York this city poverty left you alone, cut off cold and ignored.

After World War II came depression not prosperity, for the mining industry was on the decline. The miners and their families lived on the dole or took off for cities like Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Akron, Baltimore, Minneapolis. The men went to work in the auto plants or the steel mills. They went with high hopes of finding the American dream. But they lived in wooden houses in the poorest part of town, coated in the grime from the great sprawling wasteland of factory plants. Nor was it just that they were poor, like Aunt Molly in New York, they found that city people looked down upon them as hillbillies.

Hazel Dickens and her eleven brothers and sisters went to Baltimore, Hazel worked at the Blue Jay Bar where she met Alice Gerrard, a traditional singer from the West Coast who had been to college in Ohio. Alice came from a different musical tradition, her mother had been a travelling classical singer and her father was also a musician. The friendship between the two women was partly an exchange and merging of these different traditions.

Alice Gerrard wrote 'You Gave Me a Song' thinking of Hazel.

'We used to be a family in our little cabin home

*Whose windows they are broken and
whose chimneys dark and cold*

But jobs were hard to find back then, it

wasn't easy to survive

*So one by one we all left home to change
our way of life.*

Got a job in the factory on the old assembly line;

Gonna climb up on the hill and leave my past behind;

But the only climbin' that I did was five flights up the stairs,

And the past I thought I'd left behind went with me everywhere.'

Hazel describes how important it was for her and the other country people from the south to meet Alice and recognise her respect for their music.

'Alice's interest in folk and country music developed during the mid-fifties and increased enormously after settling in the Washington - Baltimore area where lots of southern people were living who had moved north to find work. And some were even playing their music and singing about the hills of home. They were very much in need of friendships and people who would appreciate their music. They found all of this in Alice's living room which became famous for all night picking parties - where much good music was played and many good friendships were born'.

The city people, interested in music found that for Hazel and the other southern exiles singing was not a removed culture but part of their life and the southerners responded to their interest. Alice calls it a 'two way love affair'.

Hazel and Alice began singing bluegrass music together around 1962 in bars. Their songs continue the tradition of the women like Aunt Molly from the twenties and thirties. They sing like her of hardship and poverty, of men going to prison

'Weepin like a willow mourning like a dove

There's a man up country that I really love'

The imagery goes back even further to seventeenth century English - They sing of exile from 'the green rolling hills of West Virginia. . . the nearest thing to heaven that I know,' just as people from Ireland, Scotland and Wales have made songs about leaving places they have been brought up in but forced to leave because they can't find work.

'My daddy said, 'Don't ever be a miner.

For a miners grave is all you'll ever own'.

Oh its hard times everywhere, I can't find a dime to spare,

These are the worst times I've ever known.

So I'll move away into some crowded city;

In some northern factory town you'll find me there;

Though I leave the past behind I will never change my mind,

These troubled times are more than I can bear.'

The sadness and nostalgia would have the

hopelessness of people who can never return. But they have added another verse about going home and changing things for the better.

'But someday I'll go back to West Virginia

*To the green rolling hills I love so well
Yes someday I'll go home and I know I'll
right the wrongs*

*And these troubled times will follow me no
more.'*

This last verse is strangely prophetic for although there is still poverty and hardship in the Appalachia mining regions the oil crisis has meant that coal has come into its own again-black gold. Mines are being opened and the workers are in a stronger position to bargain with the companies. Some people are going back and they are going back now knowing how people live in the rest of America. They no longer accept that it is inevitable that they should live in wooden shacks with lavatories without flushes, die of black lung or that their sheriffs should be company stooges, their union leaders corrupt and in league with gun thugs. The women too, especially the younger women have seen there are different ways of being a woman, that you do not need to be worn down with child bearing by your early thirties and that women can live as equals with men not as their slaves. One woman who picketed in support of miners on strike in Harlan County last autumn told a New York Times reporter 'We seen all those womens libbers picketing on television and we didn't see why we couldn't too'.

But there is still a great gulf between the kind of possibilities open to most women in the womens movement and the Appalachian country woman. Hazel and Alice carry both these consciousnesses. Uprooted themselves, they are still close enough to the mining communities to feel the lack of connection between dream and reality. Alice Gerrard thinks about this and describes a woman in a song by another country singer Loretta Lynn called 'One's on the way'. 'There she is in Topeka, in her house with the screen door banging. She reads about the modern way to live and hears about what's going on with women's lib. But meanwhile there are the kids, coffee boiling over on the stove, husband unexpectedly bringing a friend to dinner and another baby on the way. What about her?'

The combination of influences, musical and social make what they are doing not just a antiquarian reproduction of the songs of the period before the last war. They express changes as well as continuities. For the lives of women who went to the cities and worked like they did in the late fifties and early sixties were still confined and stereotyped but very different from the textile mills in the south or being married to a miner. Here the alternative to marriage was there but it was still being used by men.

*'Well there's more to her than powder and
paint*

*Than her peroxided, bleached out hair;
Well if she acts that way, it's cause you've
had your day;*

*Don't put her down, you helped put her
there'*

Men have always used women as prostitutes. The difference as Hazel Dickens says is that more and more women - not only those in womens liberation are challenging the man's right to decide what is moral.

'Why is her "sin" so much worse than his just because she was born a woman? Men can no longer place the burden of shame solely on the shoulders of women!'

It is hard too for women in their thirties and forties who grew up in the fifties trying to conform to the 'feminine' stereotype which was so strong and pervading then to adjust to the new ideas of how to be a woman. They can feel put down by men and cut off from younger women. Alice wrote 'Custom Made Women Blues' for women like this, caught in between, stranded in the meanwhile. She says.

'It's not easy for lots of women these days, trying to find some sense and meaning to our lives after such long years of working to find it through our men or through society's definition of womanhood, which for more and more women is no longer proving to be enough.'

*'Well I tried to be the kind of woman you
wanted me to be*

*And it's not my fault that I tried to be
what I thought you wanted to see;*

*Smiling face, shining hair, clothes that I
thought you'd like me to wear,*

*Made to please and not to tease, it's the
custom made woman blues.*

*Yes I tried to be the kind of woman you
wanted me to be*

*And I tried to see life your way and say all
the things you'd like me to say:*

*Loving thoughts, gentle hands, all
guaranteed to keep a hold of your man;*

*Made to please and not to tease, it's the
custom made woman blues.*

*And now you say you're tired of me and
all of those things I thought you wanted
me to be;*

*Is it true you want someone who knows
how to think and do on her own?*

*Lord it's hard to realise the lessons I
learned so young were nothing but lies;
Made to please not to tease its the custom
made woman blues'.*

Women who have been put down and conditioned into a femininity which is hostile and alien to many of their feelings as a person can become suspicious of any strong emotions with men. Hazel Dickens says when she met a man who was 'willing to accept me on an equal basis, I found it difficult to believe. Out of all these mixed feelings and ponderings I wrote 'Pretty Bird' '. The song goes,

'Fly away little pretty bird;

Fly fly away;

Fly away little pretty bird,

And pretty you'll always stay.

I see in your eyes a promise;

Your own tender love you'll bring;

But fly away little pretty bird

Cold runneth the spring.

I cannot make you no promise;

Love is such a delicate thing;

Fly away little pretty bird,

For he'd only clip your wings. . .'

The way oppression affects your innermost feelings is harder to work out and act clearly upon than the direct protest against material hardship, violence and injustice which Aunt Molly sings about. But the expression, and bringing to the surface of these mixed inner feelings is just as vital if we are to make a real home of the brave and land of the free. □

Cover Story

The cover photograph came about by a complete coincidence. We were looking for photographs of women folk singers from the Appalachian mountains on the lower East coast of America, to go into the music section and by chance, we visited Cecil Sharp House which is the national headquarters of folk music. Luckily for us they had a very interesting library and a friendly and helpful librarian, Barbara Newlin. She explained that Cecil Sharp had visited the Appalachians with his literary executor, Maude Karpeles in 1916-1918 to collect traditional songs of the region. Along with their collection of songs, they had also photographed a large number of the people.



I wondered why none of the people were playing instruments in the photo's, so I phoned Maude Karpeles, now ninety and very active. She explained that their songs and dance were very much a part of their life, passed down through the generations and it was only later when people moved out of the region that instruments were used.

In her book 'Cecil Sharp His Life And Work' (Routledge & Kegan Paul) she talks with great respect of these mountain people and the way they regarded their art. 'The people were mostly unlettered and had no money, but though they had none of the advantages of civilisation they had a culture which was as much a tradition as the songs they sang.'

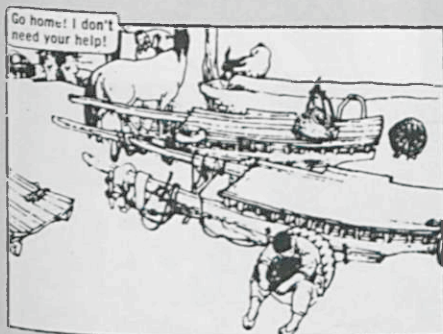
She is now in the process of editing a new publication containing all the songs they collected between 1903 and 1924.

Ann Smith

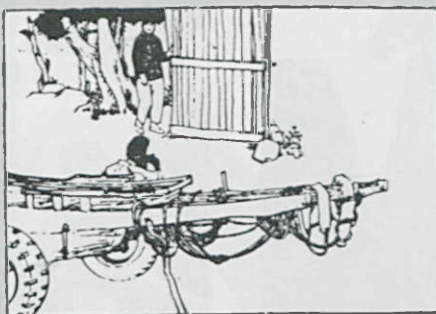


Li-Shuangshuang

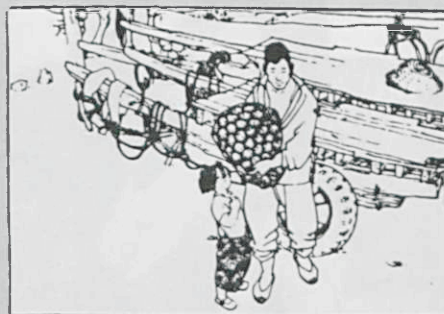
Xiwang's work brings him home



139. The carts drew into the cart depot and old Gengpo helped them unharness the horses. Sun You and Jin Qiao both hurried off to their homes. Hugging his bundle, Xiwang hesitated a second and then, as if he had come to some decision, sat down.



140. Just at that moment Xiao Ju came running towards him, her arms held wide shouting, "Papa!" He quickly threw his bundle to one side in order to hug Xiao Ju, and then he suddenly saw Shuangshuang standing by the gate watching him, her eyes wide open and her lips firmly pursed shut.



141. Many words surged through Xiwang's mind. He wanted to speak but his own pride held him back, so he put down the child and picked up his bundle again.



142. When Shuangshuang saw that he was about to walk off towards the stable, she ran forward and wrenched the bundle from his arms, saying, "See your bundle is dirty. We are wiping out the four pests at the moment; it'll soon be the five pests, unless we get rid of you soon!" And she walked out of the depot.



143. Xiwang, embarrassed, was hesitating when old Gengpo gave him a shove and said, "Go home! Don't hang around here." Xiwang picked up Xiao Ju and dashed after Shuangshuang.



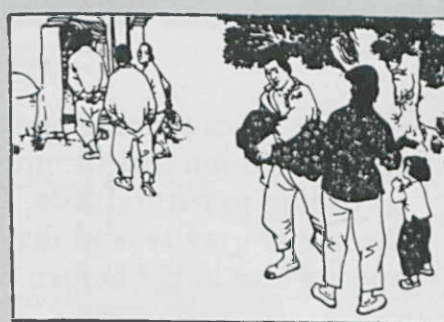
144. When he got to the gate of his own home he unexpectedly ran into her again. There was a large group of people in the courtyard surrounding Shuangshuang and Sun You was pointing an accusing finger while blurting out, "I've been waiting all this time! I've waited to this moment and who would have thought that you would have frightened our family's guest away! Breaking up somebody else's marriage is a wicked thing to do!"



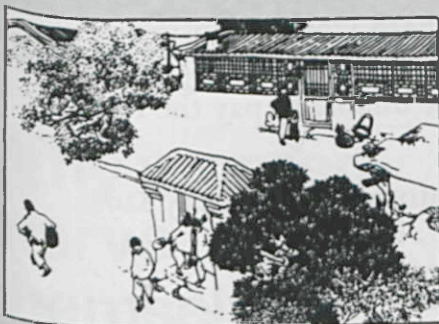
145. Xiwang felt quite numb and couldn't budge an inch. He watched Shuangshuang say firmly, "That is not right. Gui Ying already has a fiancé. Now we have free choice in marriage; they can't be arranged any more. You can't only have your eyes fixed on the town. . . ."



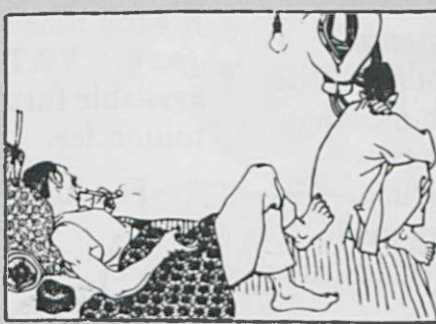
146. Jin Qiao stared at Xiwang and then patted him on the arm, asking him to go outside for a few words around the corner. Xiwang was still standing irresolutely when Shuangshuang started arguing with Sun Youpo at the top of her voice.



147. Xiwang heard this and saw it all clearly: Shuangshuang had started meddling in the important matter of somebody else's marriage. He felt very angry, walked up to her, and said grimly, "I've had just about enough of you!" He grabbed his bundle and, without looking back, ran out of the gate.



148. Xiao Ju began crying and shouting "Papa!" and struggled to break free from Shuangshuang to run after him. Shuangshuang was absolutely furious and stood in front of her holding her tightly by the hand. Seeing the awkward situation, Sun You and his wife and Jin Qiao left.



149. Xiwang sat all night in the stable attached to the cart depot and planned to join Jin Qiao and Sun You the following day to drive the carts into the district town again.



150. As soon as it was light, Xiwang left without uttering a sound. It was the hottest part of summer and the heat was exhausting. After the carts had gone about five miles, the horses were covered in sweat and breathing heavily, so Jin Qiao, Xiwang, and the others unharnessed the horses to cool them with a drink at a shady, grassy spot by the river.

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